

# **Critique and the Question of the Subject: A Mimetic Entwinement**

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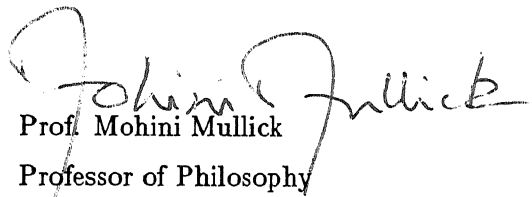


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# CERTIFICATE

It is certified that the work contained in the thesis titled *Critique and the Question of the Subject: A Mimetic Entwinement*, by **Sanil V.** has been carried out under my supervision and that this work has not been submitted elsewhere for a degree.



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# SYNOPSIS

This thesis explores the relation between critical philosophy and the philosophy of the subject. As we know, the turn of philosophy towards critique was also the Copernican turn towards the standpoint of the subject. In recent times, however, the agenda of critical thinking has become the dismantling of the subject. This critique of the subject is the point of departure of the present work. What is the relationship between critique and the philosophy of the subject, so that a critique of the subject is possible? This is the question we wish to pursue here.

Not only the subject, but the object of critique too is not free from crisis. With the critical turn thinking proceeds immanently and keeps vigilance against all separate transcendence. As critique, thinking comes of age and becomes the guardian of its own laws. But as critical thinking, it becomes almost imperative that philosophy concern itself with the non-philosophical — natural science, technology, the human sciences etc. Mature and autonomous thinking will not accept them as the privileged areas of inquiry just because it is enamored by the topicality these areas enjoy. How do these disciplines become the subject matter of philosophical thinking? Under what authority does critique take hold of these object domains? By exploring three critiques — the critique of science (Kant), the critique of technology (Heidegger) and the critique of the human sciences (Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze), we shall try to unravel critique's relation to its object and to the standpoint of the subject.

The aim of the present work is not to suggest a new conception of the subject which can provide a ground for critique nor to salvage a damaged subject from its ruins but to explore the relation between critical thinking and the insistent return of the "question of the subject". We shall interpret this relation as a mimetic entwinement. Mimesis refers to the self-reflective turn of thinking as an act of synthesis.

Mimesis as mere imitation, reproduction or deception is often discredited in the history of philosophy. It is a well known strategy of philosophy to master mimesis under the authority of truth. Either a narrow concept of truth is used to subordinate imitations as adequate to the original and to exclude bad imitations, counterfeit etc. as inadequate, or one begins with a more encompassing concept of truth and redeems mimesis as more than mere imitation — as an emanation of the original. We shall avoid all such temptations to come to a decision regarding mimesis. More importantly we shall distance ourselves from all efforts to retrieve mimesis by freeing it from mere imitation, deception and simulation. Our effort



here is to explicate mimesis as the usurpation of the positive power of the false.

We shall provide an account of mimesis as self-affection. This self-affection as deception is a synthesis in the Kantian sense but the synthesis of difference — of oneself as another. Critique as the unmasking of illusion is the accomplishment of self-fictionalisation. Unmasking critique as simulation — this is the our central theme.

In this thesis we shall try to delineate a possible conception of critique as mimesis available in Descartes, Kant, Heidegger and in three of our contemporary thinkers — Foucault, Derrida and Deleuze. We shall show that these thinkers with different philosophical concerns and divergent lineages can be situated in relation to a single thematic — a mimetic conception of critique and the subject. Our exploration of this thematic of mimesis follows the clue of a critical experience available in Descartes' encounter with the total deceiver (evil genius).

Mimesis refers to the performative character of thinking. Critique, even etymologically, calls for a decisive response to a crisis or a critical situation. In the time-consciousness of modernity the present, suspended between a dogmatic past and an open future, is perceived as in crisis and as the site of a totally novel or revolutionary beginning. The need for thinking arises from the present and immanent critique hopes to wrench its task from the very present in which it comes to be. Here critique is a response to the crisis of the present. For the Hegelian-Marxist critique the question 'what is our present?' is answered by the totality of conditions under which society reproduces itself. Critique grounds itself in a theory of society. However, the tradition of critique we are investigating avoids this collapse of critique into social theory and once again envisages the possibility of a philosophical critique.

Temporalisation of the present has always been an enigma for philosophy. Time becomes an issue for thinking in two ways: First, as philosophical time — time as a subject matter of thinking, secondly, as the time of thinking — the here and now in which thinking takes place. Mimesis, as it were, subtends an arc between this twin problematics. In each of the three critiques we discuss, we shall show that reflections on space and time get entangled with the issue of mimesis. The philosophical question about the present is "how does the present pass"? In following this question thinking comes to face to face with the possibility of an impossibility — the coexistence of oneself with an other-the-same-as-onself, that is, with its double. Our investigation focuses on this common root of the problems of simultaneity and simulation. This theme of simultaneity and simulation which persists from Aristotle's reflections on time down to Nietzsche's noon-time thought of the eternal return of the same, is at the core of a mimetic conception of Critique.



In its modern sense critique has two aspects — as a transcendental inquiry into the conditions of possibility and as a practical undertaking towards the unmasking of the illusions generated internal to the operations of reason. The perennial presence of illusion is the price thinking pays for its turn towards immanence. In this sense critique affirms illusion as transcendental and as generated not due to error but internal to the operations of thinking. Critique of ideology affirms the objectivity of illusion but treats objectivity itself as false and proceeds by appropriating this illusory objectivity to the transparency of the subjective life. Our contention is that a total and affirmative critique will not dissolve the false into the transparency of the subjective life. It is by the usurpation of the power of the false that critique manages to break through the fallacy of constitutive subjectivity. Critique divests the subject of its pretensions by fictionalising it. Simulation is the relation to oneself through fictionalisation.

We begin our study by locating our project with respect to two landmark efforts to redeem the theme of mimesis — those of Adorno and Paul Ricoeur. Here we take our distance from the Hegelian and hermeneutic problematics of mimesis.

In Chapter 1 we seek the critical experience of the Cartesian cogito in its encounter with the total deceiver. Reason comes to the realisation of its powers by conjuring up a hyperbole of its own deception by its own power and design. The self certainty of the Cartesian cogito is not grounded in the logical impossibility of conceiving total self deception but in its ability to give itself a hyperbolic fiction. What we shall try to do in the subsequent chapters is to explicate this notion of “giving oneself a fiction” as a synthetic act of the subject.

In Chapter 2 we consider in detail the Copernican revolution in philosophy brought about by Kant which was not just the critical turn of philosophy but also the turn towards the philosophy of the subject. We learn from Kant that critique is the activity of finite reason. The Kantian subject is a finite, synthetic form. Kant offers a unique solution to the problem of simulation and simultaneity by conceiving time as the inner sense. However, the free and indeterminate synthesis of the common sense annihilates the condition of time and does violence to the inner sense. To preserve the unity of the common sense Kant resorts to the familiar philosophical strategy of distinguishing between good imitation and coerced imitation where the latter originates not from form but from force. While analogy and symbolism restore playful imitation to the productive economy of reason, the coerced imitation as deception stands excluded.

In the next chapter we follow the path treaded by Heidegger from *Being and Time*



through the essays 'What Is Metaphysics' and 'On the Essence of Truth' to the Nietzsche lectures preparing his thinking for a decisive encounter with technology. Heidegger's thinking experiences the present as the end of metaphysics — which is the unconditional installation of subjectivity — and also as its overcoming. We shall try to situate technology within this relation of thought to its historicity. Our contention is that though Heidegger traces the belonging together of thinking and technology to the Greek notion of *poesis*, he fails — necessarily so — to see their relation as *mimesis*.

In Chapter 4 we discuss the critique of the human sciences by Foucault, Derrida and Deleuze. These critiques of the human sciences proceed as critiques of the Symbol, which as Ricoeur says, is the meeting point of the epistemology of human sciences and the ontology of human reality. Foucault's 'power', Derrida's 'play' and Deleuze's 'simulation as disjunctive synthesis', all indicate to us a place beyond man from where a critique of the human sciences can commence.

Foucault's introduction of "rarity" into the compact ontology of traditional philosophy allows us to deal with mimetic doubling as a relationship of force. Derrida's notion of *mimesis* as an economy of the proper and an ontology of contamination, frees thinking from the unending oscillation between an epistemology and ontology which characterises hermeneutic reflection on the human sciences. Deleuze's critical encounter with the man-form through the serial reflections on simulacra as phantasm, disjunctive synthesis of difference, partial object, the will to power and the Dionysian machine, brings together two strands of critical thinking — selection and production — and establishes a critical ontology.

Through our long journey from Descartes to Deleuze we learn to share the critical experience of unmasking without succumbing to the illusion of a presence hidden behind. Here we realize that the mimetic entwinement enables thinking to deploy the form of the question — which is always 'of the subject' and 'about the object' — at the same time escaping its spell. In concluding we indicate some important ethical issues opened up by this conception of thinking as simulation.



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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

In this age of advertisements, Disneylands and the unbearable lightness of Virtual Reality, not without a little surprise, one realises that thinking is still possible. Gift, chance, error; none of these capture the strangeness of this possibility. Today we learn the protocols of thinking from machines which think much faster than men. Wonder and mystery are hardly found in the handbooks of secular thinking. Despite the disappearance of all depth and secrecy, on the outermost surface of being we continue to feel local irritations which have no better name than thinking. Our present work is an attempt to come to terms with these surface irritations.

In this thesis we shall be concerned with a certain experience of critical thinking. At the outset let us admit, we do not claim to bring all aspects of thinking under this experience. Perhaps, elsewhere and in other times, thought proceeds according to a different agenda. However much we conceal it, critique has an active and inextricable element of the negative. It courts skepticism, strays into lowly origins of things, digs up platitudes under profound enigmas. Perhaps, beyond the endless reflections of critique there exists a more positive and affirmative thinking which proceeds without indignation and resentment. Before embarking on this 'way out' or "exit" we wish to pause for a while and take a closer look at the critical enterprise itself. This is what we set out to do in the present study.

This dissertation is organised around three themes; critique, the philosophical concept of the subject and mimesis. The relation between critique and the subject is well known. The birth of critical philosophy coincides with the Copernican revolution which shifted the center of thinking to the standpoint of the subject. However, the relation between mimesis and critique is not sufficiently explored. Philosophy has either maintained a strict vigilance on mimesis which is often characterised as play imitation, deception, counterfeit, simulacra



etc., or given it a dignified place by denying the above characterisations. Our present task is to situate critical philosophy within this problematic of mimesis.

This study is conceived as a response to the prevailing “philosophical doxa” about the dismantling of the subject. Our aim is not to salvage a damaged subject from its ruins but to explore the relation between critique and the insistent return of the question of the subject. We propose to conceive this relation as a mimetic entwinement.

We shall pursue these themes by studying three major critiques — the critique of natural science (Kant), the critique of technology (Heidegger) and the critique of the human sciences (Derrida, Foucault and Deleuze). Our contention is that in taking hold of natural science, technology and the human sciences as objects, critique is taking aim at the present, the ‘here and now’ of thinking. We shall attempt to portray the relationship between thought and time as a mimetic play. The question of the subject and the question of philosophical conceptuality as such will be taken up within the problematic of mimesis. In this chapter we shall introduce these basic themes.

## 1.1 Critique and Crisis

As is customary, we too shall begin with taking notice of some etymological facts. Dictionary traces the etymological origin of ‘critique’ to the Greek word *κρίνειν* which means decision and also crisis. Etymologically, critique is a decisive response to a crisis or a critical situation. A crisis demands a decisive intervention; a decision or a selection or a sorting out of the situation. Crisis is not a mere problem. A genuine crisis occurs when all the viable techniques of solution are also implicated in the problem situation. Though the crisis calls for a decision, the former should not be thought of as a half-baked form of the latter.<sup>1</sup>

At the least, these etymological considerations tell us that critique is no mere criticism, fault finding, checking for errors etc. Critique involves a positive way of selection and decision.<sup>2</sup> This means that selection of the uncommon is rejection of the common place only

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<sup>1</sup>Perhaps, dictionary is the last place a philosopher should look for the secrets of words. Heidegger, the master of etymological listening, hears in the word *κρίνειν* the resonances of “to sort”, “to sort out”, “to lift out that of special sort”, “lifting out of the special, the uncommon, and at the same time decisive”. (*What is a Thing?*, pp. 119-120.) Heidegger does not hear any intimation of “crisis” in the Greek word. His ears quicken to the lifting out or the display of the special — the special coming to stand erect in unconcealment, *aletheia*. Despite this selective hearing, Heidegger offers the following characterisations of critique; “determinative and decisive”, “delimitation”, “demarcation” and “selection”. Here selection primarily has a positive meaning and implies rejection only derivatively.

<sup>2</sup>The characterization of critique as positive brings it closer to its ferocious enemy Positivism. Heidegger, (and later Foucault) does not fail to notice their proximity. The former notices “The sense of the term ‘critique’ is so little negative that it means the positive of all positive, the positing of what must be established in advance in all positing as what is determinative and decisive”<sup>3</sup> Hence for him critique belongs to the age of



by implication. Similarly decision does not mean choosing from already available options. The decision or selection is not imposed on the critical situation as if from outside. According to the commonly accepted calendar this event can be dated to the Copernican turn in philosophy brought about by Kant. But this turn has an ambiguous significance and every critical enterprise since Kant has provided its own account of this event. However, all these versions about the threshold of critique share an anti-metaphysical stance. While every critique after Kant is a critique of metaphysics, among them, there is hardly any agreement on the nature of metaphysics. Logical empiricism advanced a critique of metaphysics from the standpoint of the progressive accumulation of verifiable knowledge. For Kant critique was waking up from the slumber of dogmatism. Heidegger's object of critique was "western metaphysics" which needs to be overcome by following the trails of a forgotten origin. Though all critical projects declare their object as metaphysics, we should not think of metaphysics as a set of ideas or doctrines or even as a habit of thinking which can easily be circumscribed under that generic name and whose essence can be readily elicited by submitting it to a question like "what is metaphysics".

The profound architectonic shifts which took place in the structure of thinking that brought about the critical turn will be discussed in chapter 3. Here we shall only mention the most important feature of this turn — the turn towards the immanence of thought. It is not that immanence was unknown to metaphysics. The insistence on unity and the priority accorded to the one over many testifies to metaphysics' concern for immanence. But metaphysics thinks immanence as always immanent to a transcendent. With the critical turn immanence moves to the center and thinking acquires a rare austerity which prevents it from being lured by 'separate transcendence'. Immanent critique is the vigilance against the transcendence of the given. Thinking is already complicit in anything at all that is given to it. The turn towards immanence shows critique's maturity to take responsibility in the making of that which is given to it. Since critique proceeds immanently, criticism of the given and the self-criticism of reason become identical. Reason's immersion in immanence comes to testify its regard for the transcendence by refusing the latter's separatedness.

Immanent critique practices a double vigilance. While it is suspicious of any "given" it also refuses to trust a "beyond" of the given. If thinking is involved in the making of the given then it should also be party to the unfolding of the beyond. A folding into the same should in the same movement generate an unfolding of the different - this was the task of immanent critique. It is as an immanent critique that philosophy becomes worldly. It is

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the mathematical. As we shall see neither Heidegger nor Foucault would allow their "critiques" to go under the name critique.



as immanent thinking that the totally other becomes a “problem” because a relationship to the other has to be established in the folding and unfolding of the “same”. Immersion into immanence distinguishes critique from mere criticism which takes on the object from the outside and thereby reduces itself to subjective opinion.

For example skepticism criticizes rationalist dogmatism for the latter’s inability to provide justification for its cognitive claims. On the other hand Kant finds dogmatism a deviation within reason itself and undertakes a critique to expose the presumptions and pretensions of reason. Kantian critique aims to bring to self-knowledge the perversion of reason that gives raise to both dogmatism and skepticism. The first step towards this knowledge is to acknowledge that such perversions occur according to reason’s own “eternal and unalterable laws”. In this sense, the turn towards immanence is a turn towards an ethics of thought. Thinking will take on only that which it can claim by right. This right can be conferred on it only by its own authority.

Though centrality of immanence is common to all critical projects, they differ on the localization of this field of immanence. Kant localized it in a transcendental consciousness. The “Spirit”, body, language, all can be possible locations. With the critical turn, the field of immanence however soon becomes identical with the standpoint of the subject. Hence, the critical turn in philosophy was also a turn towards the philosophy of the subject.

When Philosophy becomes immanent critique, a certain tension grips both the subject and object pole. On the one hand, philosophy moves towards a philosophy of the subject — here the “of” should be understood in the genitive sense. It is not philosophy about the subject but philosophy undertaken from the standpoint of the subject. On the other hand, as philosophy becomes the guardian of its own laws, its boundary with its outside — the non-philosophical disciplines of science, art, literature, human sciences, political economy etc., becomes blurred. As critique it becomes almost imperative for philosophy that it concerns itself with other disciplines. Therefore in subsequent chapters we shall track down the transformations critique brought about in its relation to both the subject and object. We shall take a close look at the relation between the concept of subject and critique. We shall investigate three major critiques — Kant’s critique of natural sciences, Heidegger’s critique of technology and the critique of human sciences by Foucault, Derrida and Deleuze to learn how critique takes hold of its object domain.

The above scheme of investigation is motivated by what is perceived in recent times as the crisis of critical thinking itself. In recent times critical thinking has almost become synonymous with the critique of the subject. The main agenda for thinking seems to be



the dismantling of the subject. This critique of the subject is the point of departure of the present work. What is the relationship between critique and the philosophy of the subject, so that a critique of the subject becomes possible? This is the question we wish to pursue here. Without a proper understanding of the double turn of thinking to critique and to the standpoint of the subject, the critique of the subject may lead to a regression to pre-critical metaphysics or to one of its negative images. Unless we clarify the meaning of the question of the subject for thinking we may also be tempted to offer alternative standpoints for the critique — intersubjectivity, body, historicity, the objective conditions of social reproduction etc. The aim of the present work is not to suggest a new conception of the subject which can provide a ground for critique nor to salvage a damaged subject from its ruins but to explore the relation between critical thinking and the insistent return of the “question of the subject”.

On the side of the object, we need to ask under what authority critique takes hold of its object. Secondly, by what criteria does thinking pick out these objects — natural science, technology, human sciences — as the privileged locus of critique? Mature and autonomous thinking will not accept them as privileged areas of inquiry just because it is enamoured by the topicality these areas enjoy. It is often said that Kant was enamoured by Newtonian physics and the aim of his critique was to provide the former with a secure foundation. Similarly Heidegger could be accused of attacking technology on behalf of a nostalgia for pre-technical life-form which was common among the German Mandarins. While we acknowledge the value of socio-historical or even physiological explanations of the motivations of philosophical projects, we wish to maintain that there is an immanent relationship between critique and its objects. Critique would take on these objects only to the extent that the latter throw some light on the crisis of thinking itself. Science, technology and the human sciences mark the crisis of reason. The inventory of the critical thinkers which enables them to pick out the most suitable clues from the domains of non-philosophy is what prompts our concerns here.

Critical thinking picks out its object from the socio-historical situation of its present. Thinking becomes immanent by breaking out into its ‘here and now’. While thinking has always been concerned with the daily life and matters of the polis, as critique, it is called upon to respond to the present as a moment of crisis. To think would mean to be delivered up to the present. Critique shares this uniqueness of the present with the time-consciousness of modernity. For modernity, the present, suspended between a dogmatic past and an open future is a site of perpetual crisis.

Temporalisation of the present has always been an enigma for philosophy. Time



becomes an issue for thinking in two ways: First, as philosophical time — time as a subject matter of thinking, secondly, as the time of thinking — the ‘here and now’ in which thinking takes place. In taking aim at science, technology or political economy, critique is in fact aiming at its own present. “What is our present” ceases to be a sociological or historical question and becomes a properly philosophical one.

In the present, at issue is what Hegel calls the need or what Heidegger calls the task of thinking. Need is the necessity that attends thinking at any time. Hegel saw that the need for philosophy arises from the disrupted totality of cultural formations whose overcoming is the former’s task. The task of thinking cannot be imposed on it from outside. Thinking as immanent critique hopes to wrench this task from the hands of the present in which it comes to be. It is by orienting itself in the present that thinking comes to grips with itself.

Even pre-critical thinking was concerned with its own present. However it did not see the present a special site to take up its tasks. It conceived the present as something made present to thought. It either dissolved the present in a continuous history or in an eschatology. As Foucault has shown, since Kant, the ‘present’ begins to instill a shudder at the heart of thinking<sup>4</sup>

However, when it comes to philosophical time - conceptions of the present within philosophy - the present has always been a site of irresolvable aporias. Which philosopher has not forewarned his readers against the traps of the so called ‘ordinary conception of time’. In order to understand the relation between philosophy and its time we shall begin with the problems arising within philosophical conceptions of time. We shall try to follow up the meditations on time as the crisis point of philosophical thinking. However, what interests us more is not the specific conceptions of time philosophy articulates but the crisis to which philosophical thinking throws itself open by meditating on time.

The critical turn is marked by a radical change in the conception of time — from aporetic formulation of Aristotle to the *a priori* of Kant. As we shall see within the architectonic configuration of critique, this turn brings about a new significance to the problematic of the subject and mimesis. During this study, on many occasions we will return to this problematic of the subject, simulation and time. As prelude to this exploration we shall briefly consider how Aristotle formulates the question of the present.

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<sup>4</sup>Foucault, “What is Enlightenment?,” in *The Foucault Reader*, pp. 32-50.



## 1.2 Duplicity of Time

For Aristotle, the question about the being of time leads to aporia. If time is divisible and now is a part of it, then one part of now is not longer and another part is not yet. "In one sense it has been and is no longer and in another sense it will be and is not yet."<sup>5</sup> The being of now has as its parts non-beings. "One would naturally suppose that what is made up of things which do not exist could have no share in reality." On the other hand if time exists, then now is not its part.

Where does the aporia lie? Being is temporally predetermined as being present. Time is non-present and hence non-being. For time, to be is not to be. Why time is non-present? The essence of non-presence is already determined as not yet and no longer. Thus time is non-presence.

For Aristotle, the form of time is 'now'. Time is what is bound in the now. 'Now' is the self-same; it is also the non-same. Prior nows cannot cease-to be in following nows because it will not cease to be as the same now. Also as a 'now' which has been, it will be beyond the action of a following now. Nows cannot follow one another by immediately destroying each other; in that case there will not be time. It can't also cease to be in any other now because the innumerable nows in between them will be simultaneous. Now cannot also remain in itself, in that case "things which happened ten thousand years ago would be simultaneous with what happened today and nothing would be before and after anything else."

The 'now' is defined as the impossibility of co-existence with another now. Time passes only against the impossibility of a 'now' coexisting with another 'now' as itself. Derrida describes this Aristotelian aporia;

The now, presense in the act of the present is constituted as the impossibility of coexisting with an other now, that is with an other-the same-as itself. The now is (in the present indicative), the impossibility of coexisting with itself: with itself, that is with an other self, an other now an other same, a double.

But it has already been remarked that this impossibility, when barely formulated contradicts itself, is experienced as the possibility of the impossible. The impossibility implies in its essence, in order to be what it is, that the other now, with which a now cannot co-exist, is also in a certain way the same, is also a now, as such and that it coexists with that which cannot co-exists with it. The impossibility of co-existence can be posited as such only on the basis of certain co-existence, of a certain simultaneity of the non-simultaneous in which the alterity and identity of the now are maintained together in the differentiated element

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<sup>5</sup>Aristotle, *Physics*, 217b.



of the same.<sup>6</sup>

The co-existence of the point (in space) is similarly impossible. For Aristotle the essence of space is co-existence. But it cannot appear as such without presupposing temporalisation. Nor can time conceived as succession appear as such without presupposing the impossibility of co-existence. Time and space refuse to appear and since they are what they are not, can only appear as analogous to each other.

The above aporia has its source in the inconceivability of the “at the same time”. The impossibility of being together is not an attribute of ‘now’ but its essence. The essence of ‘now’ is the impossible *simultaneity* of itself with its double — *simulation*. The complicity of the same and the other in the ‘simul’, as simulation and simultaneity, constitute the aporia. The ‘simul’ — “at the same time and at the same place”— is neither spatial nor temporal but its duplicity is the origin of both space and time.

Whenever the ‘present’ is thought, what is presented to thought is this duplicity of the ‘simul’ but under the false appearance of the present. Hence the suspicion of the critique that the ‘present’ is the stage of grand illusions. The task of the critique has always been to liberate the present from stasis and reification under the spell of illusions; the illusion of the present and the present illusion. Thus critique’s concern for the present and its vigilance against illusions seem to have a common origin. We shall follow the mutations this origin undergoes from Kant to Deleuze.

For the precritical philosophy errors and illusions have their origin external to reason. With the critical turn the genesis of illusions is accounted for within the very operation of reason and according to its ‘eternal and necessary laws.’ Illusion attains a transcendental status. Critique cannot prevent the production of illusion but can only guard reason from being deluded by it. We see the history of the critical enterprise as an effort to come to grips with and fully affirm the power and persistence of illusion. We see Kant’s three critiques as progressively radicalised efforts at affirming and mastering the production of illusion. From the Kantian characterisation of the presence of illusion as a fortunate perplexity the critique matures to a more affirmative stance where immanence itself is conceived as a veil that hides nothing but the fact that there is nothing behind it and synthesis is conceived as simulacral production. At the end of this journey we may discover that the real achievement of the Copernican turn is a shift from *the mirror to the mask* as the paradigmatic form of reflection. This persistence of illusion leads us to the problematic of mimesis.

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<sup>6</sup>Derrida, “Ousia and Gramme,” in *Margins of Philosophy*, p. 52.



### 1.3 Mimesis

Mimesis as mere imitation, reproduction or deception is often discredited in the history of philosophy. It is a well known strategy of philosophy to master mimesis under the authority of truth. Either a narrow concept of truth as adequation is used to subordinate imitations to the original and to exclude bad imitations, counterfeit etc. as inadequate, or one begins with a more encompassing concept of truth and redeems mimesis as more than mere imitation — as an emanation of the original. We shall try to show that mimesis escapes all attempts to master it under the authority of truth. We shall discuss two such attempts — Kant's productive imagination and Heidegger's *poiesis*. However, this is not the proposal for a negative theology of mimesis. In Derrida, Foucault and Deleuze we see the prefiguration of a critical ontology of mimesis.

What is at stake in the recovery of mimesis is brought out well by Adorno and Ricoeur in their landmark efforts to redeem mimesis as essential to the performance of thinking. While Adorno turns towards mimesis as a response to the crisis in the Hegelian- Marxist tradition, Ricoeur cuts his path through hermeneutic phenomenology. We feel that our own inquiry into the mimetic play of critical thinking needs to be situated with respect to the redemption of mimesis undertaken by these two thinkers. Since during the course of our present work we may be making several references to these thinkers, we shall devote a considerable portion of this chapter to articulate our perspective on their philosophical projects. The aim of this discussion is to pay our debt to these master thinkers who made the question of mimesis once again thinkable and also to free ourselves from certain habits of thinking best represented by them. However, we shall not hesitate to admit that the philosophical acumen of these two thinkers is invulnerable to knock-down arguments and polemics. Moreover, the sensibilities of Adorno and Ricoeur form a philosophical ethos we too aspire for. However, our path is different and all along this present work we shall continue to struggle against the pull of a dialectics and an hermeneutics, though without the counsel of Adorno and Ricoeur our efforts may fall prey to the naivete of an analytic.

#### 1.3.1 Adorno: Synthesis as Imitation

Mimesis was Adorno's response to what he perceived as the crisis of critique. The Frankfurt School of critical theory, following the tradition of Hegel and Marx opens philosophical thinking to social theory and empirical research into the conditions of reproduction of the social totality. This was expected to achieve a philosophical critique of the society and a materialist critique of philosophy. As an immanent critique this empirical investigation into



the totality of the conditions of social reproduction is expected to wrench from the object of investigation, the norm with which that social totality can be criticised. It presupposes society's ability to represent to itself — at least to the theorist — as an integrated whole, as an immanent moment of rationality in an otherwise skewed totality. This decision to proceed empirically should be seen as a partial and strategic endorsement of the objectivity of the critical situation of society.

This immanent critique which affirms the object but wishes to negate its objectivity as a false appearance of the actualisation of the subjective life ran aground due to two important reasons; first, the failure of society to testify to the rational subjective life of a 'we' to whom the philosophical critique can address itself to, secondly, the social totality itself became a symptom of a distorted reason. It is as if the injustice perpetrated by critique on the object by negating its objectivity as false is avenged in the loss of the 'we'. With no subject to vouch for the totalisation, the totality itself becomes false. To solve this crisis, Adorno offers mimesis as the concept of a novel relationship of critique to the object whereby the critique will be guided by the logic of the object.

Adorno proposes mimesis as a counter-concept to critique. He defines mimesis as making oneself similar to the other. Like most philosophers attempting to redeem mimesis Adorno too distinguishes it from the mimicry of animals and mere imitation of copies. These imitations, according to Adorno, reduce the imitated to the status of object of control. Mimicry helps animals to survive by imitating death but in their mere survival what wins out is death itself. Unlike mimicry mimesis is assimilation "onto" the object.

However, critique has always followed the logic of the subject. The slogan of the critical turn was that instead of our concepts fitting to the object, the object needs to conform to our concepts. Adorno is not simply inverting this cosmology of the Copernican revolution. He knew it too well that "the construction of transcendental subjectivity was a magnificently paradoxical and fallible effort to master the object in its opposite pole". Nothing other was thought at the pole of the subject than the general sense of objectivity in general. A mere reversal of poles would only accentuate the oscillation between a subjective and objective idealism, that characterises the post-Kantian philosophy. However, Adorno was convinced that only the object is capable of arresting this oscillation between the subject and the object. Mimesis models the philosophy of the subject which is itself the ground of critique, onto the object. For Adorno it was art which provided the model for an object.

This turn of critical theory to aesthetic theory should not be misunderstood as 'aestheticisation' of reason or the preparation for the mystic invocation for an impulse of



reconciliation. What led to this turn was the recognition of a common prehistory of reason and mimesis. Art gives a clue to this prehistory. In art this common origin is doubly concealed.

Both mimesis and reason work by identification — the former by “identification with” and the latter by “identification of”. Adorno problematises their relation to identity. While reason makes the object like itself mimesis makes itself like the object. However, in doing so reason and mimesis imitate each other! The violent gesture of reason can only be accomplished with the complicity of mimesis. Without the force of reason mimesis will be reduced to mimicry. Reason imitates mimesis by excluding mimesis as mere imitation. In its exclusion mimesis is raised to the highest degree. Only in the work of art that mimesis seeks reason. However, as the spirit of art reason is most illusory and powerless. Thus for Adorno the prehistory of reason and mimesis is one of the disintegration of both.

This relationship of reason and mimesis is not that of contradiction as known to dialectics. It threatens the very immanence of reason through which dialectics unfolds. Mimesis is the logic of disintegration of this immanence. As we have said, the transcendental turn was an attempt to master the transcendence of the object by localising immanence in the subject. Adorno discovers cracks in this field of immanence. How does immanent critique proceed once the immanence itself begins to disintegrate? Adorno’s answer was a negative dialectics that proceeds through these very cracks. Negative dialectics intensifies the negativity of critique against the completion of synthesis and affirms the non-identity of thought and being. Mimesis follows a logic which affirms this non-identity — a logic of the object.

Pure identity is that which the subject posits and this brings up from outside. Therefore paradoxical enough to critique it immanently means to critique it from outside as well.<sup>7</sup>

Through the cracks, the immanence, as it were, unfolds into the exterior. Though immanence cannot be sustained as the identity of thought and being, it can unfold as a relation between objects. This is the reason for objects having a logic at all.

For Adorno it is art which opens up philosophy into an immanent relationship with the object. Once the field of immanence begins to disintegrate, reason will no longer be able to solve its antinomies nor to ward off illusions. However, Adorno tries to lodge this very powerlessness as a weapon of critique. Art works like an antinomial machine. It is doubly illusory. Art imitates not only reality but itself. It is only in a society which as a whole has become untrue that illusion would find their truth as art. Art participates in truth through

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<sup>7</sup>Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 145.



illusion. Art can preserve truth only in virtue of its unity which is fabricated and imposed upon its parts. Again this artificiality of unity also is concealed. Art can discard its illusory character only by being literally true but in that process it will be reduced to fraud. The power of illusion enables art to distinguish itself from fraud. So far as this distinction has to be made art needs the help of thinking to redeem the import of its illusory character.

Traditionally, the source of illusion is traced to the sensuous element. For Adorno the illusory character of works of art originates in their spiritual essence. Spirit is cunning in distancing itself from the empirical. Art conceals this cunningness and presents the spirit as inhering in an arrangement of elements. However, there is yet another double bind waiting for us here. The spirit is not merely illusory; it is true also. As art it can criticise all claims to false autonomy. On the other hand it is by transcending the particularity of works of art that spirit lays claim to truth. Only as art can false spirit reach truth. But art has only a semblance to truth. As we know, a genuine likeness to truth would render the work of art as nothing but fraud. Distinguishing genuine likeness from fraudulent semblance has been the task of critical thinking. Art gets thinking to do the same job but in an inverted manner. Here it is the semblance that preserves the truth. If the working of art necessitates this paradoxical intervention of philosophy, philosophy, through its relation to art, is allowed to have a contingent knowledge of the absolute as non-identical. Only art can free the non-identical from the compulsion of identity. Philosophy can know the absolute only by using its conceptual resources to imitate art.

For Adorno, thinking and art belong together in an immanence whose very stuff is made of illusion. However, Adorno could think about this immanence only in negative terms with respect to its own impossibility. Adorno's immanent critique was animated by the utopian moment of a broken promise to realise the truth of philosophy and art in their own dismantling. On the one hand, art becomes dependent on philosophy for the redemption of its illusion. On the other hand philosophy which realises its ideals only through art becomes powerless. In this situation Adorno expected that the immanence that links philosophy and art would rip itself open to the social where alone the truth of philosophy and art would be redeemed.

Adorno seems to think that the false unity of the immanence is burst open by the apparition of the non-identical. This disintegration itself is conceived as an unfolding within immanence. Here immanent critique comes up against antinomies of illusion which it cannot solve. Adorno always hesitated to articulate the apparition of the non-identical as a synthesis. Instead he laid his hopes in a philosophy of history with a utopian content.



For Adorno synthesis meant construction of the one over many. It is the epistemological instrument which brings about the continuous identity of the subject and the object. Hence Adorno's preference for an incomplete mediation as the guardian of the non-identical. However he was too much a Hegelian to sacrifice the standpoint of his negative dialectics to this incomplete mediation. Hence he interprets Hegelian dialectics in such a way that synthesis becomes an insight into the insufficiency of mediation. While dialectics is an insight into non-identity under the aspect of identity, it preserves the non-identical only as a negated or perished moment. Against this Adorno protests

Only in the accomplished synthesis, in the union of contradictory moments, will their difference be manifested.<sup>8</sup>

However, for Adorno a critique of synthesis of the One is not a claim to the unmediated Many.

The illusion of taking hold of the many would be a mimetic regression, as much a recoil into mythology, into the horror of the diffuse, as the thinking of the one, the imitation of blind nature by repressing it, ends at the opposite pole in mythical dominion.<sup>9</sup>

Adorno believed that a critique of synthesis should salvage the plural through the concepts which are congealed synthesis. "Unity alone transcends unity." Mimesis can offer a critique of synthesis because the unifying tendency of the latter is only an imitation of the former which grants the affinity of the many.

... [T]he syntheses of the subject are indirect conceptual imitations of what that synthesis seeks on its own.<sup>10</sup>

Mimesis accomplishes the counter-synthesis by imitating conceptual synthesis which is already an imitation. Mimesis synthesises through the construction of what Adorno, following Benjamin, calls "constellations". Through these constellations Adorno hoped to make the concepts "assimilate on to" what they preclude. Constellation is a simultaneous arrangement of concepts.

Constellation illuminates the specific side of the object, the side which to a classifying procedure is either a matter of indifference or a burden.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Negative Dialectics p. 157

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid*, p. 158.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid* p. 158.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid* p. 162.



Concepts are arranged around the object inducing a 'linguistic apparition' of the latter as non-identical. To affirm the non-identity of the object means to enable its concept to overcome the arbitrariness of a word and to become the true name. In a constellation concepts can say what they always wanted to say about the object — their difference from the object.

Language thus serves the intention of the concept to express completely what it means. By themselves, constellations represent from without what the concept has cut away from within: the "more" which the concept is equally desirous and incapable of being. By gathering around the object of cognition, the concepts potentially determine the objects' interior. They attain in thinking what was necessarily excised from thinking.<sup>12</sup>

The conceptual mimesis unlocks the non-identical moment entrapped within the self-sameness of the object. Adorno does not look for the moment of non-identity in the concreteness of the object. Hegel has shown that a concrete object can be its own context. For Adorno the non-identical bursts open through seclusion of such contexts. The non-identical, though it remains opaque to the claims of identity-reason, seeks to be audible. The non-identical kernel of the object is not pure interiority but a relation to the exterior, for which concepts with their claim to be context-free are the best representatives. The concept which has been excising one object from other objects is deployed for the sake of a new knowledge mindful of the historical positional value of the objects in relation. Constellations make possible the communication between objects as historical positional values or, to put in Leibnizian terms, as events through conceptual mimesis.<sup>13</sup> Adorno's insistence on the 'conceptual' nature of mimesis makes one thing clear; for him, mimesis as the unfolding of the inside onto the outside is an immanent process. This immanence, congealed in the interstices of the disintegrated immanence of dialectics allows the movement of Adorno's thought.

Still, Adorno often shies away from articulating the construction of this new level of immanence. While claiming that constellation determines the interiority of the object as non-identical, he does not clarify the specific nature of this synthesis. Perhaps we shall never get a clarification because according to him mimesis points to a utopian moment in history where philosophy itself will be transcended. Of Course this history is not the story of a subject but a natural history. We need not go into the details of his concept of history. Let us only notice that this new history will once again pitch him against Hegel. Every time Adorno

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid* p. 162.

<sup>13</sup> Our reference to Leibniz is not without justification. Adorno describes the response of the object to the constellation using the vocabulary of Leibniz; "The object opens itself to a monadological insistence". The object is a monad — a room without windows. But it throws open its lock in response not to a single key, or number but a combination of numbers.



twists the arm of dialectics and stages an escapade, the unending circles of dialectics weave a new trap for him. One may even suspect that Adorno is yielding to a certain fetishism of paradoxes. Slowly we begin to feel that perhaps all this conceptual labor is not worth the trouble. Even this cannot be a complaint against Adorno because he began with the obsolescence of philosophy though his claim that uselessness is the only use of philosophy is indicative of his fetish for paradoxes.

### 1.3.2 Ricoeur: Cunning and Confession

For Ricoeur, speculative thinking on time, from Aristotle to Husserl inevitably ends up in aporia. In mimesis he finds the balm for the wounds speculative thinking has suffered at the hands of time. The first and, for Ricoeur, the most serious aporia involves the non-congruence between the phenomenological and the cosmological perspectives on time. A conception of time as objective, as in Aristotle, though demands a subject who experiences time, does not say anything about lived time. On the other hand, a phenomenology of time gives us no clue to the objective time. The second aporia involves the unity of time and its dispersion into past, present and future. The third aporia deals with the inscrutability of time. In thinking time, a certain hubris which impels our thinking to master everything meets the true master — time — which scuttles all our attempt to master it. Time escapes all attempts to constitute it, by revealing itself as presupposed by the very activity of constituting. Mimesis, according to Ricoeur, instead of hoping to solve these aporia, puts them to productive work.<sup>14</sup>

Mimesis provides us with an access to time which is not that of speculative thinking. Thinking and time are entwined in human action and hence mimesis as performative thinking penetrates through those dimensions of time which are inscrutable to speculation. Ricoeur's retrieval of mimesis too begins with the clarification that mimesis is not imitation. For him mimesis is narrative synthesis of time. Time comes to human through a three fold mimesis involving the narrative prefiguration, configuration and refiguration of time.<sup>15</sup> These three stages subtends a mimetic arc between the speculative articulations of time and the time of these articulations.

A word of caution here. Ricoeur handles two distinct problems — that of the mediation between time and its speculative aporia, and that of time and narrative. Mimesis receives a detailed treatment primarily as mediating between narrative and time. The question of

<sup>14</sup>Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, Volume 3.

<sup>15</sup>Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* Volume 1.



the three fold mimesis is addressed only after subordinating it to the problem of narrative.<sup>16</sup> Here Ricoeur follows the neo-Kantian method which begins with antinomial formulations, splits the limbs of the antinomy apart and introduces mediating terms till one term of the antinomy flows into the other. Mimesis appears in a chain of mediating terms. Narrative is introduced between the speculative and time, mimesis between narrative and time, and the three stages of pre-figuration, configuration and refiguration between mimesis and time. Mimesis is not only a mediating term but a term for mediation. The intelligibility of mimesis is drawn from the faculty of mediation. However, for Ricoeur who is vigilant against Hegel, mediation is imperfect. Mimesis is imperfect mediation.

Ricoeur accounts for this imperfection not from any standpoint of the perfect. It is characterised by an essential temporal difference — the difference of the present. This is pitched against the claim of Hegelian philosophy that “philosophy can attain not only the present, by summing up the known past, taken as the seed of the anticipated future, but also the eternal present, which assures the underlying unity of the surpassed past and the coming manifestations of life that already announce themselves by means of what we understand, because what we understand has already grown old.”<sup>17</sup>

It is the impossibility of a totalisation into an eternal present where the present is identical with itself that makes room for mimesis. Interestingly what mimesis as narrative replaces is its mimetic counterpart in the Hegelian system which ensures totalisation — “cunning of reason”. Reason is cunning in staging the events of history behind the back of agents so that their actions may have implications which transcend their intentions and consciousness. Cunningly, Reason makes use of passion for its own growth in the soil of unhappy consciousness. This cunning is another name for the sacrifice of particularity for the sake of the preservation of reason; a sacrifice which is also a ritual of deceit. The Spirit actualises through cunning and hence this cunningness has to be lifted out as the logic of dissolution of the particular and accorded the highest status in the developmental history of reason. It is through cunning that reason temporalises itself, lifting the present to the self-presence of the eternal present.

Hegel neutralises this cunning nature of reason by including it in the grand design of world-history. Ricoeur chooses another strategy. He rejects the self-presence of the eternal present and thereby makes cunningness an opacity palpable for hermeneutic mediation. According to Ricoeur Hegel had to come up with this bizarre notion of the cunning of reason to establish the self-presence of the present where reality and presence are equated. This led

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid* p. 123.

<sup>17</sup> Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, Volume 3, p. 203.



Hegel to exclude narrativity from philosophical consideration of history. Ricoeur disowns the claim to presence and hence does away with the need of finding deceit at the heart of reason. Instead he gains room for narrativity in the gap that now opens up between philosophy and the present which is not identical with itself.

Since mimesis has gained a place by displacing cunningness, it will not have anything to do with deception. Instead the mimetic moment is retained as fiction. What Hegel thought as cunningness is the fictionalising essence of reason. Once we accept the non-identity of presence and the real, then opposition between the real and the fictional disappears. Fictional narrative can now be interpreted along the lines of Kantian productive imagination.

This retrieval of mimesis, as the mourning work for an imperfect mediation is in line with the general philosophical strategy on mimesis. Wherever, imperfection or incompleteness has to be granted in the working of reason, it is done under the name of mimesis. Mimesis comes to play in the gap between a historical consciousness and time, or between the present and itself. Mimesis is not productive of this imperfection or temporal difference.

As we have said it is as deceit that reason is temporal. This temporalisation which is characterised by Hegel as 'development' is a repetition or return upon itself of the spirit. Development is not linear progress. Its earlier stages are repeated at higher stages, of course being worked upon by the negative. Features of organic life are repeated at the higher stages of spiritual development. Even cunningness, a character of low origins, re-appears at the heights of the actualisation of spirit. This gives a circular character to the temporalisation of reason. In Ricoeur's words "This is the feature of the permanence of species that assures the repetition of the same and that makes change a cyclical course."<sup>18</sup>

This cunningness and repetition of the same need to be seen as the transfiguration of configuration. The permanence of the spiritual configuration is subjected to transfiguration or the labour of the negative through repetition. The identity of this transfiguration and repetition is the eternal present.

Thus deceit offers a unique solution to the problem of the present, its uneasy position between a past as no longer being and the future as yet to come. "What the spirit is now, it has always been. For the philosopher time is now available as eternal present. His eyes discern the living past as "signs of maturity from which shine a sufficient clarity concerning what is essential".

As we have said, Ricoeur tames the cunningness of reason with the hermeneutic gesture of admitting imperfect mediation. This saves him from Adorno's tortuous course of

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<sup>18</sup>Ricoeur, *ibid* p. 200.



articulating the mediated transcendence of the non-identical. Ricoeur achieves this by playing two phenomenologies — Husserl's and Hegel's — against each other and thereby forming an amalgam of their respective failures. The Hegelian dream of the eternal present is shattered with the living present of phenomenological consciousness. The self-assurance of the living present is broken by subjecting it to the work of mediation. In Ricoeur's account both Hegel and Husserl checkmate each other at their weakest points.

The hermeneutic concept of imperfect mediation brings closer the logical difference and temporal difference without permitting their complete overlap. Ricoeur fears that if they mesh totally the result would be an "apology for difference pushed to the point of temporal exoticism." A theory of event as difference, according to Ricoeur would be nothing but a negative ontology. Hence, Ricoeur says

In the last analysis the notion of difference does not do justice to what seems to be positive in the persistence of the past in the present.<sup>19</sup>

Mimesis mediates the gulf between the reality of the past and the narrative accounts that refer to that past. According to Ricoeur the past is real in the sense of "being as". Narratives 'stand for' or 'take the place of' the past. Here ontological reality is granted to the temporality of 'standing for'. The 'standing for' has the structure of a trace, which for Ricoeur ultimately is the threshold of intelligibility. He defines 'being as' as ontological reinscription or the reinscription of the phenomenological time on to the ontological time. This reinscription traverses the temporal distance which is dialectical in nature. Ricoeur saves this dialectics from collapsing into the identity of the same or exploding into the other by adding an in-between term — the analogous. Now no more surprises await us. Between thinking and Being mimesis has always been the analogical.

We have seen the logic of mimesis in Adorno and Ricoeur. Adorno formulates it as paralogy and Ricoeur as analogy. While Adorno accentuates the violence of Hegelian dialectic and turn it against itself Ricoeur truncates the dialectic and earns himself a reprieve. During the course our present study we shall try to go beyond Adorno by articulating the mimesis as a synthesis of difference. We shall attempt to twist free of Ricoeurian aporetics of time by affirming the corrosive power of mimesis which renders the aporia porous, once again making it possible to think time.

In the rest of the thesis we shall be concerned with the works of some thinkers who never formulated the task of their thinking in relation to mimesis. However, we shall try to show that even in the absence of explicit formulation their thinking encounters the

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p. 151.



challenge of mimesis. We wish to study their critical endeavors in relation to the redemption, displacement and exclusion of mimesis they entail.

In Chapter 1 we seek the critical experience of the Cartesian Cogito in its encounter with the total deceiver. Reason comes to the realisation of its powers by conjuring up a hyperbole of its own deception by its own power and design. The self certainty of the Cartesian Cogito is not grounded in the logical impossibility of conceiving total self deception but in its ability to give itself a hyperbolic fiction. What we shall try to do in the subsequent chapters is to explicate this notion of “giving oneself a fiction” as a synthetic act of the subject.

In Chapter 2 we consider in detail the Copernican revolution in philosophy brought about by Kant which was not just the critical turn of philosophy but also the turn towards the philosophy of the subject. We learn from Kant that critique is the activity of finite reason. The Kantian subject is a finite, synthetic form. Kant offers a unique solution to the problem of simulation and simultaneity by conceiving time as the inner sense. However, the free and indeterminate synthesis of the common sense annihilates the condition of time and does violence to the inner sense. To preserve the unity of the common sense Kant resorts to the familiar philosophical strategy of distinguishing between good imitation and coerced imitation where the latter originates not from form but from force. While analogy and symbolism restore playful imitation to the productive economy of reason, the coerced imitation as deception stands excluded.

In the next chapter we follow the path treaded by Heidegger from *Being and Time* through the essays ‘What Is Metaphysics’ and ‘On the Essence of Truth’ to the Nietzsche lectures preparing his thinking for a decisive encounter with technology. Heidegger’s thinking experiences the present as the end of metaphysics — which is the unconditional installation of subjectivity — and also as its overcoming. We shall try to situate technology within this relation of thought to its historicity. Our contention is that though Heidegger traces the belonging together of thinking and technology to the Greek notion of *poiesis*, he fails — necessarily so — to see their relation as mimesis.

In Chapter 4 we discuss the critique of the human sciences by Foucault, Derrida and Deleuze. These critiques of the human sciences proceed as critiques of the Symbol, which as Ricoeur says, is the meeting point of the epistemology of human sciences and the ontology of human reality. Foucault’s ‘power’, Derrida’s ‘play’ and Deleuze’s ‘simulation as disjunctive synthesis’, all indicate to us a place beyond man from where a critique of the human sciences can commence.

Foucault’s introduction of “rarity” into the compact ontology of traditional philos-



ophy allows us to deal with mimetic doubling as a relationship of force. Derrida's notion of mimesis as an economy of the proper and an ontology of contamination, frees thinking from the unending oscillation between an epistemology and ontology which characterises hermeneutic reflection on the human sciences. Deleuze's critical encounter with the man-form through the serial reflections on simulacra as phantasm, disjunctive synthesis of difference, partial object, the will to power and the Dionysian machine, brings together two strands of critical thinking — selection and production — and establishes a critical ontology.

Through our long journey from Descartes to Deleuze we learn to share the critical experience of unmasking without succumbing to the illusion of a presence hidden behind. Here we realize that the mimetic entwinement enables thinking to deploy the form of the question — which is always 'of the subject' and 'about the object' — at the same time escaping its spell. In concluding we indicate some important ethical issues opened up by this conception of thinking as simulation.



## Chapter 2

# Descartes: The Vigil of Unreason

The Cartesian Cogito has been the reference point for most of the recent discussions on the question of the subject. Perhaps no other philosophical concept has been subjected to so much criticism as the Cogito. However, beneath every effort to dismantle it, the Cogito resurjects, as though it is at once the privileged object of criticism and also the unsurpassable truth of all critical philosophy. In this chapter we shall discuss a certain critical experience of the Cogito within which the intensification of the critical impulse and the inauguration of the Cogito are fused together. This is the experience of a violent eruption of the Cogito which animates the critical enterprise and gives it a cutting edge. All the three critical endeavors we shall discuss in the later chapters happens within this violent opening whose echoes we hear in Descartes famous cry *Cogito ergo sum*.

Recent research on Descartes indicates a readiness to rethink his thoughts. Much of this re-reading lay emphasis on the textual character of philosophy in general. A close reading of the texts of Descartes shows the necessary impossibility of the Cartesian project. It has been argued that, despite all his efforts to arrive at an absolutely certain ground for knowledge by escaping the trap of resemblance, metaphors, memory and body, Descartes succumbs to these very traps as the condition of the possibility of his project. Such deconstructive readings try not only to demonstrate the necessary failure of the Cartesian project but also to inscribe this necessity into the very project of philosophy. What we wish to do here is something different. Our intention is more or less pedagogical. We wish to say or formulate what these readings perform. If this is an impossible wish, — which, as it goes without saying, it is — we shall at least make an effort to formulate this impossibility, through good examples and explanations. We shall try to point out a certain moment in the life of the Cartesian Cogito before it seeks entry into the syntax of philosophy which the above readings try to



deconstruct; the moment at which thought encounters the hyperbole of the evil genius.

This moment is brought to our attention by no one other than Derrida. In his encounter with Foucault's history of madness Derrida points out an experience of the Cogito which comes before the bifurcation of reason and madness. He decides to call it a critical experience. This is the experience of total deception which, in entertaining the hyperbole of the evil genius, the Cogito inflicts on itself. Cogito awakens to itself in total deception. It is this originary experience that we wish to describe here. We shall provide an exposition of Derrida's interpretation of Descartes — an interpretation in which the very essence of interpretation is at stake. All the major themes of our present inquiry — critique, the subject, the historicity of thought, deception — are implicated in this interpretation.

We shall take a quick look at the context of Derrida's interpretation, though we do not intend to describe it as a Derrida-Foucault debate. In *Madness and Civilization* Foucault has provided a masterly description of the history of a dividing gesture with which Western Reason constitutes itself through the violent exclusion of madness. In this book Foucault proposes an interpretation of Descartes which according to Derrida, for the first time emphasises the fundamental imbalance in the Cartesian economy of doubt; between madness on the one hand, and error on the other. According to Foucault, Descartes does not circumvent madness in the same way he circumvents error and dream. Madness is excluded from the procedure of philosophical doubt and denied the right to philosophical consideration. The Cogito by its essence cannot be mad. More than mere interpretation, Foucault's reading seeks to provide a "certain passage," between "what Descartes said — or what he is believed to have said or meant" and "a certain 'historical structure,' as it is called, a certain meaningful historical totality, a certain historical project through which what we think Descartes said — or what he is believed to have said or meant..."<sup>1</sup> In other words, what is at stake in Foucault's interpretation is the relation between what Descartes said on madness and the internment of madness that took place in the classical age. The philosophical exclusion of madness — we quote Derrida on Foucault — "is a forerunner of the political decree of the great internment, or corresponds to it, translates it, or accompanies it, or in any case solidarity with it". In general terms Foucault's interpretation raised the question of philosophy's relationship to its historical context.

Derrida responds to Foucault's interpretation of Descartes with another interpretation (which seems to be a counter interpretation, but, in any case, do we know Derrida's intentions? He confesses his reading is a banal one) which seeks to "repeat once more, on

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<sup>1</sup>Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 32.



the site of this *division* between reason and madness of which Foucault speaks so well, the meaning, a meaning of Cogito or (plural) Cogitos (for the Cogito of the Cartesian variety is neither the first nor the last form of Cogito); and also to determine that what is in question here is an experience, which, at its furthest reaches, is perhaps no less adventurous, perilous, nocturnal, and pathetic than the experience of madness, and is, I believe, much less adverse to and accusatory of madness, that is, accusative and objectifying of it, than Foucault seems to think.”<sup>2</sup>

As a prelude to our inquiry into critical philosophy, we shall present this critical experience of the violent origin of the Cogito which is an experience of a decision and a dissension. This experience is critical because it is an experience of a decision — a decision that separates reason from its exterior — and of a self-division, a torment interior to logos in general. Since we have characterised the critique as a decisive response to the crisis and since we wish to investigate its relation to the philosophy of the subject, this critical experience of the origin of the Cogito is of extreme importance to us, though, at this stage we are not equipped to decide its exact significance — whether it is a sign, a unique example or a mere sample of an experience of thinking which we wish to elaborate upon.

Derrida’s interpretation also throws light on another active concern of our study — the historicity of thought. The critical experience of the Cogito also contains the possibility of historicity itself. As we shall see our present work is organised as a metanarrative — to use a much discredited word — of critical thinking from Kant to Deleuze. If there is a historicity proper to this enterprise perhaps we might be able to delineate it within this Cartesian experience.<sup>3</sup> Our study deals with philosophy’s response to three crisis points — natural sciences, technology and the human sciences. However, it should not give the impression that these three events occurred in the history of the West in succession and every time philosophy caught up with the crisis as a belated response. The temporality of these crises cannot be separated from the temporality of the philosophical project in general. The encounter with the evil genius contains the temporal clue to the critique and the crisis.

Our decision to follow up this clue without getting entangled in a Foucault-Derrida debate on the interpretation of Descartes is not without reason. The apparent difference

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<sup>2</sup>*Ibid*, p. 33.

<sup>3</sup>Hence the ambiguous status of Descartes in our account of critique. He at once belongs to the critical enterprise and remains outside of it. He stands at the origin of this critical project but all critical philosophers after him begin their critique by displaying their anti-Cartesian credentials, by excluding him from the provenance of critique. Has Descartes not been the favourite sacrificial animal of all critique? In our study, the unity of the proper name “Descartes” would remain unsettled. In the present chapter it designates an experience which escapes the syntax of thought. But in subsequent chapters we too shall participate in the ritual of his sacrifice.



between Foucault and Derrida is about the nature of philosophical discourse. For Derrida, the Cartesian gesture is a sign and to interpret Descartes is to think the materiality of this sign. On the other hand, according to Foucault, the Cartesian gesture is "an act of force". For him to interpret this philosophical internment of madness is to trace the lines of forces that link this philosophical gesture to the creation of the houses of internment for the mad in the middle of the seventeenth century. So, if we were to force a debate between Derrida and Foucault it would be around the nature of philosophical discourse; whether it is form or force?, sign or decree? Perhaps it is not in our profit to organise an exchange between essential thinkers around such well worn choices. Moreover, it is the impossibility of the choice between form and force that leads our own work to the problem of mimesis<sup>4</sup>. In our present work we shall try to think the mimetic entwinement as a relation between form and force; refraction of forces by the doubling of forms. In the course of this dissertation we shall make an effort to bring together the thoughts of these thinkers as articulations of a mimetic moment. Anticipating this rapprochement, we shall leave aside the brawl on madness and follow the path of Derrida's interpretation of the Cogito. We shall proceed on our own through the winding path of Cartesian doubt till the hyperbolic encounter with the 'evil genius, and then let Derrida take over.

Descartes' search for certainty takes the form of methodological doubting. Here doubting takes place in two stages; doubts of natural reason and hyperbolic doubts. In the stage of natural doubt, the totality of the sensory foundations of knowledge is called into question. In hyperbolic doubt the absolute totality of reason is suspect. These stages do not come in succession. Though Descartes begins with natural doubt and proceeds to hyperbolic doubt, the former already contains the latter as one of its moments. He begins by suspecting

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<sup>4</sup>Perhaps there is a more straight-forward mimetic clue available in Derrida's interpretation of Foucault-Descartes. It concerns the exemplarity of philosophical discourse and its pedagogical status. Example and pedagogy point at the mimetic moment of philosophy; example by provoking imitation and pedagogy by moulding the soul of the disciple. According to Derrida, Foucault chooses Descartes's philosophical exclusion of madness as an example of the classical age. Derrida's question is: "What is the exemplarity of Descartes, while so many other philosophers of the same era were interested or — no less significantly — not interested in madness in various ways" (Derrida, *Writing and the Difference*, p. 45.) For Derrida the citation of good, happy examples for the sake of pedagogy and speaking well of madness all take place within logos. Moreover, madness does not receive any special attention from Descartes because it is not a happy, good example which serves the purpose of a pedagogy which is inseparable from philosophy itself. The theme of pedagogy comes up again and again in this discussion. Derrida conceives his engagement with Foucault in the form of a pedagogical drama in which the former takes the role of the student who is questioning the teacher whose role is assigned to the latter. Derrida, the student finds that the teacher practices his ideas well but fails to formulate them. The student also argues that this pedagogical failure has a necessary effect on the teacher's philosophy. The history of this pedagogical exchange is well known now. Foucault, the teacher, dismissed the criticism of the disciple as a little piece of pedagogy! If we decide to leave aside this mimetic clue that lies between pedagogy and performance and avoid a performative reading of Derrida, again it is because of our own pedagogical interest. We wish to formulate the question of mimesis and treat these thinkers as our examples!



some occasions of error and extends this suspicion hyperbolically to the totality. If my senses deceive me sometimes then they could be deceiving me all the time. Some nucleus of certainty always escapes this hyperbolic totalisation. As the next step Descartes moves towards a new hyperbolic totality within which the previous totality and the nuclei of certainty are shown to be illusory. Doubting proceeds by drawing thinking into its own exaggerations and excesses till thinking finds its ground in this very excess.

Descartes begins his meditations by doubting his senses. "Now I have sometimes caught the senses deceiving me; and a wise man never entirely trusts those who have once cheated him."<sup>5</sup> Though senses may sometimes deceive us there are other indubitable facts; "... that I am here, sitting by the fire, wearing a winter coat, holding this paper in my hands, and so on". Unless I am mad I cannot be doubting their existence. "Again, these hands, and my whole body — how can their existence be denied? Unless indeed I likened myself to some lunatics, whose brains are so upset by persistent melancholy vapours that they firmly assert they are kings, when they really are miserably poor; or that they are clad in purple, when really they are naked; or that they have a head of pottery, or are pumpkins, or are made of glass; but then they are madmen, and I should appear no less mad if I took them as a precedent for my own case. To imagine that I am mad would indeed be an extravagant hypothesis." Descartes leaves aside or excludes this hypothesis but nevertheless preserves and intensifies its extravagance.

Descartes radicalises his doubts further. "I could be asleep and often in my sleep too I had the familiar conviction that I am here etc. All the clear and distinct perceptions of me I have here and now can be had while I am asleep." All those certainties — my body, my sitting here etc., — which the hypothesis of madness did not allow Descartes to doubt are brought under the new hypothesis on sleep. Under this new hypothesis the totality of sensory perceptions is put to doubt. Having denied certainty to sensory perceptions Descartes moves on to the intelligible. It may be the case that all my sensory perceptions are illusory and I have no hands or body. But still these illusions must have been formed in the likeness of some general kind of things like eyes, hands body etc. which must be real.

Painters themselves, even when they are striving to create sirens and satyrs with the most extraordinary forms, cannot give them wholly new natures, but only mix up the limbs of different animals; or even if they did devise something so novel that nothing at all like it had ever been seen, something wholly fictitious and unreal, at least they must use real colours in its make-up. Similarly, even if these general kinds of things, eyes, head, hands and so on, could be imaginary, at least it must be admitted that some simple and more universal kinds of things

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<sup>5</sup>Descartes, *Philosophical Writings*, p. 62.



are real, and are as it were the real colours out of which there are formed in our consciousness (*cogitatione*) all our pictures of real things.<sup>6</sup>

Since Descartes has already rejected sensory perceptions as the ground, he should not be giving a particular type of sensory perception like colour any privileged status. Here, colour is the simple idea that all representations, however fictitious and extravagant they may be, contain. Color, by analogy, is the intelligible content of representations. Colour stands for the minimum level of intelligibility, that even illusions need to share in order to appear as illusions. The intelligible is simple, general and indubitable. Sciences like arithmetic and geometry which concern themselves with the simplest and most general objects have indubitable certainty. "Whether I am awake or asleep two and three add up to five, and a square has only four sides; and it seems impossible for such obvious truths to fall under a suspicion of being false."

But Descartes tries to radicalise his methodological doubt by questioning the intelligible too. However, doubting led by the light of reason fails to penetrate its own intelligibility. For a while Descartes imagines that God could be deceiving him when he is adding two and three to get five or when he is counting the sides of a square. But this is inconceivable because God is supremely good and it goes against his nature to be a total deceiver. "Any fraud or deception involves imperfection." My errors show only the imperfection in me. I possess not only the idea of perfection but also the idea of nothingness and I am a kind of intermediate between God and non-being. Error, though lacking positive reality has its ground in my ontological deficiency. However, the good nature of God does not give us an absolute guarantee about our knowledge either. Because it does not go against God's nature to have created me such that I am deceived sometimes. Though Descartes musters up the courage to doubt the veracity of God, he is unable to move from "some" cases of deception to the hyperbole that God could be deceiving him "all" the time. Here the first stage of doubt reaches its limit. Neither perceptions nor ideas are indubitable grounds of knowledge. Nor can Descartes radicalise his doubt any further so far as he stands with the natural light of reason. Since illusory ideas may return by habit and get his assent against his will Descartes takes the resolve to deceive himself and pretend that all his ideas are false and imaginary "until in the end the influence of prejudice on either side is counterbalanced." Since reason has failed to take doubt to its extreme, Descartes would now conjure up the other of reason and pit it against reason. In order that he may doubt the reason of doubt itself he has to go beyond reason and put it under scrutiny. Since God whose being is derivable from its idea

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p. 63.



does not offer a spring board to step beyond reason, Descartes has to mobilise the resources of reason in a hyperbole. In the final passage of the First Meditation Descartes presents his encounter with the hyperbolic evil spirit — the total deceiver.

I will suppose not that there is a supremely powerful God, the source of truth; but there is an evil spirit who is supremely powerful and intelligent, and does his utmost to deceive me. I will suppose that sky, air, earth, colours, shapes, sounds and all external objects are mere delusive dreams, by means of which he lays snares for my credulity. I will consider myself as having no hands, no eyes, no flesh, no blood, no senses, but just having a false belief that I have all these things. I will remain firmly fixed in this meditation, and resolutely take care that, so far as in me lies, even if it is not in my power to know some truth, I may not assent to falsehood nor let myself be imposed upon by that deceiver, however powerful and intelligible he may be. But this plan is irksome, and sloth brings me back to ordinary life. I am like a prisoner who happens to enjoy an imaginary freedom during sleep, and then begins to suspect that he is asleep; he is afraid to wake up, and connives at the agreeable illusion. So I willingly slip back into my old opinions, and dread waking up, in case peaceful rest should be followed by the toil of waking life, and I should henceforth have to live, not in light, but amid the inextricable darkness of the problems I raised just now.<sup>7</sup>

Without exaggeration we can say these words of Descartes contain one of the most anxious moments of Western philosophy. Here Descartes deploys a mode of skepticism which would not have been possible had he followed the light of natural reason. He not only posits reason and deception side by side but also opens up their dividing line for contestation between them. Within “natural doubt” it was not possible to leave the boundary between them to doubt. Also, he could not retain the concept of waking and dreaming and simultaneously allow them to get mixed up. Hyperbole allows him to transgress the boundaries of concepts without giving them up. But Descartes has to pay a heavy price for this hyperbolic feat. He resolutely withdraws from the light of reason to the “inextricable darkness”. It is only by losing himself into this darkness of utter deception that Descartes hopes to find the indubitable ground of reason.

In the second *Meditation* Descartes indeed discovers the ground he has been searching for.

‘But there is some deceiver, supremely powerful, supremely intelligent who purposely always deceives me.’ If he deceives me, then again I undoubtedly exist; let him deceive me as much as he may, he will never bring it about that, at the time of thinking (*quamdiu cogitabo*) that I am something, I am in fact nothing. Thus I have now weighed all considerations enough and more than enough; and must at length conclude that this proposition ‘I am’, ‘I exist’, whenever I utter it or conceive it in my mind, is necessarily true.

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<sup>7</sup>*Ibid*, p. 65.



The effort to salvage the Cogito from the inextricable darkness begins here. Soon the clamor of the Cogito settles down to the sobriety of logic and meaning. Its fear and panic subside in the *ergo* of the *Cogito ergo sum*. We shall focus our attention on this turn in the trajectory of the Cogito.

Two different kinds of questions can be put to this experience of the Cogito; what is the essence of the Cogito if it can entertain the thought of total deception? or Who can entertain the hyperbolic thought of total deception? As we shall see the singularity of this experience of the Cogito — its uneconomic expenditure — falls outside the economy of these questions and is presupposed by that economy. The meaning, history, language and the history of philosophy which separate these questions and also allow us to negotiate between them are suspended by this experience. In other words the Cogito addresses philosophical thinking prior to the differentiation of the modality of its questioning. In this sense the Cogito is anterior to the question of the subject so far as that question poses itself as a question of the “who” or of “what” or as an interminable oscillation between the two. It is from this twilight zone of the question that Derrida listens to the cry of the Cogito.

For Derrida total deception is an instantaneous and the most intense experience of the Cogito. This singularity is anterior to the separation of reason and madness. It does not take part of reason as order nor of madness as disorder. Total deception spares nothing. it subverts intelligible objects, clear and distinct ideas and the truths of mathematics. Hence Derrida insists that — and this insistence organises his interpretation of Descartes — the Cogito, which entertains the thought of the evil genius must be madder than madmen. At the heart of the madness of madmen we find the very language of reason made accessible to us counterfeited as madness. In the encounter with the evil genius this counterfeiting is driven beyond its limits, to make it confess that it is reason itself, the I think, the Cogito; ‘I am deceived therefore I am.’

Though the issue of madness is not our main concern, we need to take notice of Derrida’s equivocation between total deception and total madness. As such deception and madness are not equivocal. As we have already seen, mere madness does not measure up to the stringent demands of methodological doubt which culminates in the encounter with the total deceiver. Methodological doubt is expected to overcome every determinate form of deception. Finally, through the thought of the evil demon the totality of deception is represented to the doubting thought. The idea of total deception goes beyond every determinate form of deception and form of negativity. At this moment, no determinate form of negativity has any privilege in pitching itself against reason. Once prefixed by the “total”, deception and



madness become equivocal. The Cogito as an excess over every determinate form of madness is madder than madmen.

The Cogito is a zero point anterior to the separation of reason and unreason, meaning and non-meaning. This zero-point is the “impenetrable point of certainty in which the possibility of critique is embedded. According to Derrida, by forgetting the audacity of this zero-point and by identifying it with the order of reason in which it is inscribed, we are forgetting the origin and possibility of critique.

The hyperbolic audacity of the Cartesian Cogito, its mad audacity, which we perhaps no longer perceive as such because, unlike Descartes’s contemporary, we are too well assured of ourselves and too well accustomed to the frame-work of the Cogito, rather than to the critical experience of it ...<sup>8</sup>

Derrida’s reading attempts to recollect an experience of the Cogito as an excess of every frame within which it is inscribed. This critical experience consists in thinking the totality of all determinate opposition and, at the same time, escaping it as excess. What does escape mean here? Derrida answers:

By escaping it: that is to say, by exceeding the totality, which — within existence — is possible only in the direction of infinity or nothingness: for even if the totality of the world does not exist, even if non-meaning has invaded the totality of the world, up to and including the very content of my thought, I still think, I am *while* I think. Even if I do not in fact grasp the totality, if I neither understand nor embrace it, I still formulate the project of doing so, and this project is meaningful in such a way that it can be defined only in relation to a pre-comprehension of the infinite and undetermined totality. This is why, by virtue of this margin of the possible, the principled and the meaningful, which exceeds all that is real, factual and existent, this project is mad, and acknowledges madness as its liberty and possibility.<sup>9</sup>

The project of “exceeding the totality of the world, as the totality of what I can think in general” is a demonic project. It gets underway by pitting itself against the evil demon. This excess can be articulated only in the fiction of a language and a language of fiction. This fictional awakening of the Cogito is also a reduction or bracketing of the “natural man” within Cogito but unlike in the phenomenological epoche the Cogito has no control over this act and takes no responsibility for it.<sup>10</sup> The Cogito is an excess in the direction of “inextricable darkness”, non-determined or infinity. It is an encompassing totalisation that

<sup>8</sup>Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 56.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid*, p. 56.

<sup>10</sup>Derrida takes up the relation between responsibility of thinking and the Cogito in Derrida, *Edmund Husserl’s Origin of Geometry: An Introduction*, section VII.



goes in excess of the totality of all that can be thought. This excess is critical on two counts; first, the evil genius and the total deception do not have their origin in the finitude of the Cogito, secondly they do not appeal to any evasive transcendence. Foucault formulates this criticality of the Cogito well:

It is true that the Cogito is an absolute beginning. But one must not forget that the evil genius comes before it. And the evil genius is not the symbol in which are resumed and systematised all the dangers of those psychological events which are dream images and sensible error. Between God and man, the evil genius has an absolute meaning: in all his rigor he is the possibility of unreason and the totality of its powers. He is more than a refraction of human finitude; he designates well beyond mankind, the danger which might impede mankind from arriving at truth in a definite manner; the major obstacle, not to a particular mind but to particular reason. And it is not because of truth which the Cogito illuminates ends up masking the shadow of evil genius entirely that one must forget his continually dangerous power; this danger will underlie Descartes' procedure up until existence and the truth of the external world.<sup>11</sup>

Evil genius is not a symbol of danger. It is the very danger "as the movement of reason menaced by its own security."<sup>12</sup> It is the very possibility of unreason and the totality of its power. It is possibility itself as crisis and danger. The truth of the Cogito never fully dissipates the power of the deceiver. Illusion is not a shadow which will disappear in the illumination of natural light. The power of unreason accompanies thought and keeps vigil around it. Neither the good nature of God nor the deficiency of one's faculties account for the challenge of the evil genius. The challenge between the perfection of God and the genius of the demon (who is no less powerful than deceitful) is anterior to the distinction between Good and Evil. Of course faced with the challenge of the evil demon, the Cogito ultimately turns towards God who creates the world anew every instant. But it is to meet the challenge of evil that God needs to undertake the creation of the reality.

However, the Cogito is not just the experience of the hyperbole but also "an-attempt-to-say-the-hyperbole". While the Cogito awakens to itself in the excess of total deception, it cannot tell itself or others so. Once he reaches the heights of the hyperbole Descartes descends into the domain of normality, meaning and deductive systems. In its mad audacity the Cogito is valid only in the singular instant of its experience. The survival of the Cogito demands its temporalisation. Here Descartes turns towards God who recreates the world every instant thereby reassuring the Cogito. According to Derrida this re-assurance is a

<sup>11</sup>Foucault, *Folie Et Deraison: Histoire de Folie a l'age Classique*, p. 175. quoted in Cook Deborah, "Madeness and the Cogito: Derrida's Critique of Folie et deraison" in *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, Volume. 21, No. 2, May 1990, p. 171.

<sup>12</sup>Derrida, *Writing and difference*, p. 62.



reconciliation between truth and time in the positive infinity of God. We quote from a long footnote of Derrida:

For Descartes, the crisis of which we are speaking would finally have its intrinsic (that is, *intellectual*) origin in time itself, as the absence of a necessary link between its parts, as the contingency and the discontinuity of the transition from the instant to instant; ... In the last resort, only continuous creation, uniting conservation and creation, which "differ only as concerns our way of thinking," reconciles temporality and truth. It is God who excludes madness and crisis, that is to say embraces them in the presence that encompasses all traces and differences.<sup>13</sup>

From the audacious infinity of the hyperbole the Cogito shrivels back into the reassuring and reconciliatory infinity of the God of rationalism. These two stages are not in succession. In fact this move is the very temporalisation of the Cogito whereby the crisis of the passage of time is resolved. Time appears to be the only guarantee against deception. In the absolute simultaneity of the instant the Cogito, though valid, is under the spell of simulation. It is by temporalising this instant that Cogito escapes from total deception. Simultaneity is the site of deception. For Descartes temporalisation is the reconciliation of this 'site', this 'location' with thought — through the thought of infinity. In this sense the Cogito is the very possibility of historicity itself and hence time as such would not receive the attention of Descartes.

The Cogito temporalises in the history of philosophy. So far as the Cogito reflects and proffers in an organised philosophical discourse it is not deceived or mad. Once Cogito is said, it enters language and history "that betray its wellspring and constrain the wandering that is proper to it so that error may be circumvented." Henceforth The Cogito is a work. It is a thought that thinks its words and means what it says.

We need to distinguish the hyperbolic moment of the Cogito from the language in which it is inscribed for communication. When we hear *Cogito ergo sum* we should distinguish the fiction of language within which the Cogito awakens to itself and the language of fiction within which it is communicated to others and to itself. However this distinction is not a separation.

I believe that historicity in general would be impossible if we possessed only hyperbole, on the one hand, or on the other, only determined historical structures, finite *weltanschauungen*. The historicity proper to philosophy is located and constituted in the transition, the dialogue between hyperbole and the finite structure, between that which exceeds the totality and the closed totality, in the difference

<sup>13</sup>Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 299.



between history and historicity; that is, in the place where, or rather at the moment when, the Cogito and all that it symbolizes here (madness, derangement, hyperbole, etc.) pronounce and reassure themselves then to fall, necessarily forgetting themselves until their reactivation, their reawakening in another statement of the excess which also later will become another decline and another crisis.<sup>14</sup>

Critique takes "place" in this "moment" of transition. The Cogito temporalises in and as this transition. The position of The Cogito as "the interior of the exterior and the exterior of the interior" should not be confused with the interminable oscillation between the transcendental and the empirical.<sup>15</sup> The rhythm of the Cogito "is not an alternation that additionally would be temporal. It is rather the movement of temporalisation itself as concerns that which unites it to the movement of logos."<sup>16</sup>

This temporalisation is violence — an act of force. It is the forced entry into the world, language and history "of that which is not there but presupposed by them." This is the violence of an excess and its appropriation by an economy. It is the "regulated relationship between that which exceeds and the exceeded totality."

The fall into language is the inaugural violence of naming violence itself as violence. The attempt to say violence and the violence that impose silence are one and the same act of force. This attempt-to-say, which for Derrida is the first passion, is the condition of silence.<sup>17</sup>

Form, force and deception; together they define a matrix within which we shall study critical thinking. It is very important for us to come to grips with the extreme difficulty of associating thinking with the act of force; phenomenology — of Hegel and of Husserl — warns us against the naivete of talking about force. Force in its articulation becomes form. Derrida acknowledges this difficulty when he says that philosophy, during its history has been determined as the "twilight of forces, that is the sun-splashed morning in which images, forms and phenomena speak; it is the morning of ideas and idols in which the relief of forces becomes repose, its depth flattened in the light as it stretches itself into horizontality."<sup>18</sup> However, Derrida does not fail to point out that this difficulty has to do with the inability of language to emerge from itself in order to articulate its origin and not to do with the thought of force. "Force is the other of language without which language would not be what it is."

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p. 60.

<sup>15</sup> Foucault characterises modern thought by this oscillation between the transcendental and the empirical. (Foucault, *The Order of Things*, pp. 318-322).

<sup>16</sup> Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 61.

<sup>17</sup> Within the dimension of historicity in general, which is to be confused neither with some ahistorical eternity, nor with an empirically determined moment of the history of facts, silence plays the irreducible role of that which bears and haunts language, outside and against which alone language can emerge — "against here simultaneously designating the content from which form takes off by force, and the adversary against whom I assure and reassure by force." (*Ibid*, p. 54.)

<sup>18</sup> Derrida, "Force and Signification", in *Writing and Difference*, p. 28.



In the history of philosophy, form and force relate to push imitation and deception to a derivative status. When it remains unformed or uninformed by form, form deforms. The power of illusions comes from the deformity of forms caused by force. The task of critique has been conceived as the practical overcoming of this deformation by subordinating force to form. It is only against this history and the difficulties it poses that we can experience the lines of forces traversing the Cogito. To think the thought of force or to think along the lines of force is also to think of mimesis and to think mimetically. Mimesis has always been thought as the imitation of form. Mimesis is dangerous because it leads to the diminution and deformation of form. Mimesis is either kept under strict vigilance because it plays with discordant forces or it is given the respectability of art because it composes or configures the discordance of forces into the concordance of form. In both the cases we refuse to think of mimesis in terms of a structure that opens up forms to the play of forces and also bends forces at the edge of forms. The thought of the evil genius is the terror of such a thinking. For Derrida philosophy itself is the confessed terror of going mad.<sup>19</sup> The Cogito is the terror of thinking and the pity of its confession. This tragic moment of thought played out between terror and pity, crisis and catharsis can not be separated from its dramatisation.

In the rest of our work we shall be concerned with this drama of critical thinking as it is staged by some prominent thinkers of the West. Since our aim is more pedagogical than performative (!) we shall be focusing on perhaps a less dramatic moment of their thinking — when they name this drama and talk about it explicitly. As Derrida indicates, the consciousness of the crisis is also its forgetting. Our own effort to become conscious of the mimetic moment demands the forgetting of the madness of thinking that we witnessed in Descartes. Hence in our later discussions wherever a certain thought is associated with the name of Descartes, we shall feign not to remember the mad audacity that willed its confession to go under the sobriety of a proper name. In this sense we may request the reader to treat this chapter as a pre-face, a mask, that comes prior to the face or as that famous ladder which Wittgenstein asked as to throw away once we finish climbing.

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<sup>19</sup> "I philosophise only in *terror*, but in the confessed terror of going mad." (*Ibid*, p. 62.)



## Chapter 3

# Kant: Critique of Natural Science

Philosophy becomes critical philosophy and philosophy of the subject with the Copernican revolution brought about by Kant. In this chapter we shall be concerned with the significance of this novel turn. How did the turn towards the subject and the turn of the critique coincide? Vigilance against illusions, masks, counterfeits and idols has always been on the agenda of philosophical thinking. The concept of subject has its precursors in Plato's soul, Augustine's will, and Descartes Cogito. What revolution has Kant initiated in unmasking illusions and in the conception of the subject? We wish to maintain that, Kant moves towards a positive and affirmative evaluation of illusion in the use of reason and makes it central to the subjectness of the finite subject. However, as we intend to show, Kant's affirmation of the power of illusion remains partial and he stops short of acknowledging the mimetic moment of critique.

Our inquiry proceeds through the specific problematic Kantian critique addressed - the conditions of the possibility of knowledge where Euclidian geometry and Newtonian physics offered the paradigm for knowledge. How is it that science as such becomes the subject matter of Kantian thinking? What is involved in philosophy addressing science with the question about the conditions of the latter's possibility? Let us sharpen this question a little more. How does philosophical thinking come to feel the pressure of science? We are familiar with the sociological and biographical answers to this question. We are seeking an answer at a different level. We want to know what architectonic shifts in thought have brought about this change opening up philosophy to address itself to science.

In this brief survey we shall try to locate the points of rupture between Kant and Descartes.<sup>1</sup> We shall show that the Kantian subject is a finite and synthetic being and

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<sup>1</sup>Our interpretation of Kant takes nourishment from two magisterial interpretations of his work — one offered in Heidegger's *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* and the other in Deleuze's *Kant's Critical Phi-*



critique is the activity of finite reason. This characterization of the philosophy of the subject will spare us from various attempts to go beyond the subject by invoking the empirical, the sensuous and above all the figure of finitude, because all such escapades are organized within the familiar orbits established by the Copernican revolution. In Kant finite reason recognizes that there are illusions generated within the operation of reason itself. With this, critique affirms illusions and deploys itself with the task of constant vigilance. However, the Kantian subject pays for this audacity with the diremption of its own unity. In this sense Kant's philosophy is a continuous struggle with illusions at once affirming and denying them. We shall try to show, that, while grappling with the violent origin of common sense Kant would take his final decision against illusions by demarcating play from deception, thereby delimiting the scope of his critique.

### 3.1 Copernican Revolution

What is the Copernican revolution in philosophy? Revolutions in one sense bring about the novel and in another sense recirculate the same old things again and again. With Kant the concept of revolution achieves a special significance for philosophy. The Copernican revolution does not exhaust itself in a mere shifting of the standpoint of thinking, though our present study will focus more on this shift. For Kant revolution is an experience of a transcendental enthusiasm in the 'here and now' of thinking. This need not have any direct correlative in the empirical world. Philosophy relates to science in sharing a feeling of daring and enthusiasm which the discovery of Copernicus generated in the field of scientific activity. Philosophy becomes contemporaneous by sharing this daring not only with the sciences but also with the French revolution.

In philosophy, revolution marked the birth of the philosophy of the subject. By philosophy *of* the subject we don't mean philosophy about the subject. It is a philosophy which belongs to the subject — philosophy from the standpoint of the subject. The subject here is not that about which questions are asked but the very form philosophical questioning i.e., the form that makes all questioning possible. Though Copernican revolution brought

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*losophy*. These original interpretations develop two different possibilities of thinking and have established two independent paths for critical philosophy — the path of thinking as listening by the former, and as combat by the latter. We shall investigate these possibilities disclosed by Heidegger and Deleuze in detail in the subsequent chapters. In this sense our ambivalence in interpretation only attests the prefiguration of the two possibilities in Kant. It is on this ambiguous terrain that the future debates on the possibility of critique will take place.

Though we admit the influence of these thinkers, we are not able to stop at every juncture and point out the the influence of Heidegger or specify the insight derived from Deleuze. What we call influence is a certain giddiness we feel between two mountain peaks or two skyscrapers.



about a shift in the center, the center continues to be imprisoned within circular orbits. The circle whose every point is an origin and also an end is the magical figure of thought. Since Kant, thinking means entering some circle or the other — the dialectical, or the hermeneutical circle or the “circle” of the eternal return.<sup>2</sup>

The transcendental turn saves the critical circle from turning vicious. Transcendental philosophy is an immanent critique of reason. It fights the illusions of reason and also empowers it by bringing it back to its own authority, its own element. Kantian critique is a critique of the dogmatism of rationalism and empiricism. In Kant the critique of dogmatism proceeds as the grounding of rational metaphysics. This transcendental turn has phenomenological, ontological components to it. It is transcendental because the new metaphysics discloses the conditions of possibility. It is phenomenological because the transcendental field is individuated into a consciousness and a priori forms are explicated as its sense. But as Ricoeur says “Husserl did phenomenology, but Kant has limited and founded it.”<sup>3</sup> Ricoeur recovers a phenomenological moment implicit in Kant and locates the availability of the critique in the ontological intentions of Kant which free the critique from the tutelage of phenomenology. In other words, for Ricoeur, Kantian critique is the availability of an ontological standpoint from where the “from-me-ness” of the phenomenological subject can be criticized. During the course of the discussion we shall unpack these moments of critique.

The slogan of the Copernican revolution is this:

Hitherto it has been assumed that all our knowledge must conform to objects. But all attempts to extend our knowledge of objects by establishing something in regard to them *a priori* by means of concepts have on this assumption, ended in failure. We must therefore make trial whether we may not have more success in the tasks of metaphysics, if we suppose that objects must conform to our knowledge.<sup>4</sup>

Many things are overturned here. First, Kant seems to reject all conceptions of knowledge available till his time at one go. All theories of knowledge before Kant — according to him — have thought of knowledge as the adequation of our representations to the self-positing of beings. He turns this upside-down. Only human reason is self-positing. Beings should comply to this self-positing. We are not passive receivers of knowledge but its active producers. But there is no room for subjectivism here because objects must conform to what

<sup>2</sup>As we shall see, mimesis too survives through circulation and repetition but by bursting through the magic band of the circle.

<sup>3</sup>Ricoeur *Husserl*, p. 201.

<sup>4</sup>Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. xvi.



we produce. Knowledge has the power to command over the objects we seek to know. If objects turn their face towards us in our cognition, it is because of the *a priori* necessity of a command which binds them to our cognitive faculty.

The question of knowledge, as in Meno's paradox, has always been posed as an *aporia*. On the one hand Knowledge concerns the world but we bring it along with us. On the other hand knowledge is a synthetic achievement; in knowing we learn something new. Descartes offered a novel solution to this *aporia*. Even before we encounter any entities, even ourselves, God has deposited his signature in us as the idea of Infinity. In virtue of this de-position, I give myself as an object of cognition before I encounter anything in the world. Kant shows that Descartes is confusing the self-positing with the positing of objects. For Kant self-positing is anterior to the de-positing of the Idea of Infinity by God. Also, due to the radical finitude of human reason we cannot give ourselves any object of cognition including what we ourselves are. All that we can posit for ourselves is the form of anything at all to be given — the form of objectivity in general — but no content.

Here reason becomes subject-centered by acknowledging its dependence on the object. However, as self-positing it frees itself from its dependence on divine grace by giving itself the form of objectivity. This is the paradox of the Kantian subject. It is self-positing, but in positing itself it posits the form of objectivity.

The ground of the *a priori* is not the given object but a transcendental principle; the conditions of possibility of the object of experience are the same as the conditions of possibility of experience. The objects of experience do not have conditions autonomous of our knowledge of them and do not relate to us externally by divine grace. There is a necessity that governs both being and knowing. It is not their actual correspondence but the conditions which enable us to seek any correspondence at all that is the subject matter of transcendental philosophy. The ground of representation is not to be sought by analysing the content of representations till their vanishing point but by establishing the *a priori* conditions which make any representation possible.

Knowledge is no longer an instrument or a medium that exists between the object and the subject. The knowing subject is the one in whose knowing the very being of objects of knowledge is at stake. Here Kant establishes the possibility of a general ontology — a prior relation to beings which appear for scientific inquiry. By the same move he grants the regional ontologies — the formal objects of science - freedom from being determined by external considerations — even by reason. This is a novel way of posing the question of knowledge. For Kant too truth is representational adequation. But he gives priority to the



question ‘What is Knowledge?’ over ‘What is truth?’. ‘How is knowledge possible?’ is no longer a question about method. By raising knowledge itself as an object of inquiry prior to the inquiries into method and truth Kant radicalises epistemology and surpasses it. Kant takes physics as the privileged locus to disclose the a priori necessity that governs reason’s employment in seeking ontic knowledge. Though Kant takes Newtonian physics as the only possible science of nature, we shall not overestimate the importance of this presupposition to the Critique. First of all, Kant is not doing a theory of Knowledge to establish the validity of knowledge claims. His question is about the intrinsic possibility of knowledge. The fact about knowledge to be explained is not the method but the conditions of its possibility. The actuality of Newtonian physics is significant only in so far as it discloses the intrinsic possibility of knowledge. All that Kant wants to ascertain is that the human endeavor called science is not pointless though the thing-in-itself is unknowable. This ‘point’ does not lie in any correspondence of our representations with ontic nature because that to which it corresponds is nothing but an appearance. Kant wants to show that we are not deluding ourselves in chasing these appearances. It is perfectly legitimate for reason to command one of its faculties — understanding — to engage in this activity of science.

Kantian critique aims to be total and affirmative.<sup>5</sup> It aims to be total in the sense that it does not accept any authority other than itself.<sup>6</sup> A total critique cannot have unexamined presuppositions. It is often said that we cannot question all our presuppositions at one given time and every critique must start with some presuppositions which in the course of the critical inquiry will in turn be subjected to scrutiny. However, total critique is not this piecemeal rebuilding of Neurath’s ship. Kantian critique, directed at the whole, radicalises Cartesian doubt in going beyond it.

It is affirmative because it envisages the proper limits not by denying but by liberating all its powers including the negative and neglected ones. It retrieves the positive power of all that is traditionally excluded from it. This is the critique of reason by reason. It envisages the internal limits of reason and not those limits and errors introduced by external factors like body, senses and passions as happens in Descartes. Kant affirms pure reason as sensible. Reason is sensible not because we have a body. On the contrary, man can “have” a body only because his transcendence as man as such is sensible a priori.<sup>7</sup> This affirmative

<sup>5</sup>Deleuze Gilles, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, p. 91.

<sup>6</sup>“The task is difficult and demands a reader resolved to think himself gradually into a system which is grounded in nothing regarded as given except pure reason itself, and thus tries to develop knowledge out of its original seeds without seeking the support of any fact”. (Kant, *Prolegomena To Any Future Metaphysics*.)

<sup>7</sup>“The pure reason must be sensible in itself and not become so merely because it is connected with a body. Rather the converse is true; man as finite rational being can in a transcendental, i.e., metaphysical sense “have” his body only because transcendence as such is sensible a priori”. (Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem*



moment distinguishes critique from Cartesian doubt. Critique proceeds by trusting what it criticizes.<sup>8</sup>

Critique should not be confused with criticising or fault finding. It should be able to locate its proper point of application. Critique does not waste its labour where criteria are already available for criticism. Kantian critique points itself to the dialectical illusions arising from reason's own use. We need a critique when reason itself leads to illusions and we have nowhere else than reason itself to look for a criteria for reason's own legitimate and illegitimate uses. That is, to criticize reason we need not look for any other authority than reason itself. This self-sufficiency of reason is the ultimate weapon against dogmatism which survives by offering external standards for the self-criticism of reason.

Critique is not needed to correct the illusions generated by other faculties. Sometimes imagination misleads understanding. Misapplication of categories also does not need critique. Only transcendental illusions call for critique. These illusions "exert their influence on principles that are in no way intended for use in experience in which case we should at least have had a criteria for their correctness. In defiance of all the warnings of criticism it carries us altogether beyond the empirical employment of categories and put us off with a merely deceptive extension of pure understanding." Transcendental illusion is the deceptive trespassing of the legitimate boundaries of faculties established by reason. Illusions are not errors. The idea of correction is not applicable to them.

Transcendental illusion, on the other hand, does not cease even after it has been detected and its invalidity clearly revealed by transcendental criticism ... This is an illusion which can no more be prevented than we can prevent the sea appearing higher at the horizon than at the shore, since we see it through higher light rays; or to cite a still better example, than the astronomer can prevent the moon from appearing larger at its rising, although he is not deceived by this illusion.<sup>9</sup>

Critique cannot hope to remove this natural and inevitable illusion. The natural light of reason that led Descartes will not clear the cloud of illusion. While characterizing his transcendental philosophy as a critique and not as a doctrine, Kant says:

Its utility, in speculation, ought properly to be negative, not to extend, but to clarify our reason, and keep it free from errors- which is already a great gain.<sup>10</sup>

of *Metaphysics*, trans. James Churchill, p 178.)

<sup>8</sup>Deleuze observes that Kant "seems to have confused the positivity of critique with the humble recognition of the right of the criticized. There has never been more conciliatory or respectful critique." (Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, p. 89.)

<sup>9</sup>Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 297/B 353.

<sup>10</sup>Kant, *Ibid*, A11/B25.



Thus the aim of critique is not to remove illusion but to gain a reflective grasp on its necessity as internal to the operations of reason. Critique affirms the existence of illusion but it is not deceived by it. Illusion without deception; this is all critique can hope to achieve. Reflection on illusion repeats the illusion and emancipates us from its grip. Repetition of illusion as emancipation — this is the mimetic moment of critical reason. This moment is the focus of our discussion of Kantian critique.

All that an incredulous Descartes doubted about the appearance is now inscribed within the appearance itself. Since appearances lack being-in-itself, excessive doubting is unwarranted. Moreover, such doubt also creates the illusion that the thing-in-itself is ultimately knowable as true appearance. This is not to deny the hubris that threatens reason. Kant overcomes the redundant fear of this hubris by locating its genesis in the very deployment of reason. Our lack of unmediated knowledge of reality is not something to be mourned. It gives thinking its positivity. The limit of our knowledge is not dictated by the method of universal mathesis. These limits are imposed by the positivity of thinking in the positing of being. “For what necessarily forces us across the limits of experience and all appearance is the unconditioned that authorizes us to speak of the things only so far as we do not know them”. On the one hand critique receives its authority to delimit the use of reason from the unconditioned which it is not permitted to Desecrate by representing it in the image of the conditioned. On the other hand reason does not obey any authority other than its own laws. By positioning itself at the boundary between the conditioned and the unconditioned, critique seems to operate by the transmission of power without representation.

Kant saves critique from this uneasy situation by making illusions the symbols of the unity of reason. This symbolism gives a place for an Inchoate phenomenology within critique. The other option would have been to let a negative metaphysics take over the guardianship of reason. If we wish to avoid these unhappy options we need to rethink the relation between reason and illusion.

### 3.2 From Essence to Sense

The phenomenological moment of the critique announces itself in the characterization of *a priori* forms as sense. This is a turn away from essence to the sense.<sup>11</sup> Sense is the form of sensibility. But it is not one among the senses. The sensible nature of the *a priori* is a concession to empiricism and also its ultimate refutation. Kant posits three levels of

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<sup>11</sup>To paraphrase Quine, sense is what essence becomes when divorced from things and wedded to representations!



sense — outer sense (space), inner sense (time) and common sense. The *a priori* forms as sense are located in the consciousness. It is this sense that Kant founds a phenomenology. But since this sense is not self-constitutive, Kantian phenomenology is limited — though this delimitation is immanent to reason. We shall pause for a while to sketch this shift in focus from essence to sense.

As we said, with the Copernican turn the quest is no longer for the apodeictic ground of knowledge but for a priori conditions of possible knowledge. The fundamental question that animates the critique is “How is the synthetic *a priori* possible?” Let us mark this shift of terrain in its details. First of all, the distinction between the representation and its outside is re-inscribed into a new opposition: of analytic and synthetic. For Descartes clarity and distinctness were the criteria for the certainty of representations. By distinguishing analyticity and syntheticity and relating synthetic judgements to an *a priori* necessity Kant displaces the importance so far accorded to clarity and distinctness to representations. Though clarity and analyticity are still related — in a displaced sense — analyticity itself has only a secondary role to play in epistemology.<sup>12</sup> Analysis is given the task of explicating the work of synthesis. To analyze a concept is to “become conscious to myself of the manifold which I always think in that concept.”<sup>13</sup> Analytic judgements do not extend our knowledge. Their role is to serve synthetic judgements.

... [A]nalytic judgements are very important, and indeed necessary, but only for obtaining that clearness in the concepts which is requisite for such a sure and wide synthesis as will lead to a genuinely new addition to all previous knowledge.<sup>14</sup>

While the necessity of analytical judgements can be accounted for by conceptual links, the *a priori* necessity of synthetic judgements needed a substratum. Kant finds this ground in pure intuition. By granting heteronomous elements in knowledge — concepts and intuitions Kant has absorbed the pressure of empiricist skepticism which stressed the element of sensuality and difference in cognition. Pure intuition is pure in the sense that it

<sup>12</sup>The rhetoric of the analytic tradition of philosophy ignores this shift from the Cartesian analysis to the Kantian Analytic. The clamour for conceptual clarity often has a Cartesian inspiration though the analytic no longer counts clarity as crucial for conceptual investigation. Interestingly, it is phenomenology which once again takes up the theme of clarity as a philosophical issue — as originary evidence for the transcendental ego.

The development of the semantic tradition from Frege is seen as a critical response to the Kantian notion of the synthetic *a priori*. It is true that the semanticists were quite uncomfortable with the Kantian *a priori*. They thought that “bad semantics is at the root of Kant’s appeal to the pure intuition.” (Coffa, *Semantic Tradition* p. 19.) In fact much of their criticism of Kant was based on a psychologistic view on *aprioricity*. In fact the Fregean distinction between sense and reference is just another way of punctuating the same transcendental-empirical problematic brought together in the Kantian notion of pure intuition.

<sup>13</sup>Kant, *Ibid*, A7/B11.

<sup>14</sup>Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A10/B13-14.



is not derived from sensibility. But it remains sensible because of its immanent relation to objectivity in general. The law of representation as synthetic *a priori* brings the sensuous which has always been thought of as an error, into the very heart of reason.

The essential thought that informs this extravagant notion is the general sense of objectivity itself — (object = x). While empirical intuition concerns this or that particular object, pure intuition makes the pure form of objectivity intuitable. Pure intuition is an immanent relation to objectivity in general. Pure intuition is the inner sense. The inner sense of the subject is characterized by the form of objectivity.

The subject is the locus where the form of the object is being formed. Here epistemology is freed of its worries about the external world. It can now proceed as the examination of the sense. But by bringing the synthetic element into the inner sense Kant introduces an essential otherness into the self which would make total transparency of knowledge inconceivable. In other words finitude become thinkable.

In Descartes the activity of representing itself could not be represented, not because of any opacity in the domain of the representable but because of the very transparency of representation. Representations, like Borges' map, were grafted on to being without residue. With Kant representation itself attains an essential depth or opacity and becomes thematizable. Now the Kantian question is possible: What is the fact of Knowledge? The ground of representation is not within the order of representation. No inner-hollowing out of the subject leads to the self-evidence of its foundation. The lack of being of appearance, which was feared as the source of error, is now seen as posited in thinking itself. In order that sense becomes the object of inquiry, the self loses its transparency in a fundamental way. This opacity is not something that can be removed through Cartesian doubt. It is the very structure of necessity internal to the self without which reflection cannot proceed. This leaves the Kantian phenomenology incomplete.

To found phenomenology Kant needs to break with Cartesian ontology in a definite way. Descartes' ontology consists of the Cogito, beings and God. The Cogito, like all other beings is a creation of God. All beings receive their objectivity from the sense of the Cogito. But as created beings they, along with the Cogito depend on God. In this sense Cartesian philosophy maintains a double dependence on the Cogito and God. Reason is, as it were, an infinite and incessant flickering between these reference points. Though a created being, the Cogito has a special status — it is a product of creation and also the signature of the creator. God relates to the Cogito through an instance of representation. Descartes no longer deciphers representations to unearth meanings already put into them anterior to



our knowledge of them. Representations are formed within our knowledge; representation and thought are inextricably intertwined. Any representation available independent of our method is an object of doubt. Even if God were to speak to us he needs to make use of our knowledge and the order of representation set up by us. Thus while granting the need of God in grounding knowledge, Descartes has brought this intervention into a necessity which can be clarified through an immanent doubting of representations themselves. Here Descartes took a bold step towards the secularization of Knowledge. More than merely continuing this secularization Kant radicalises it by giving it a fundamental turn.

We have said that for Descartes the Cogito was God's creation and the creator's signature. First of all the signature is representation par excellence. It is closed in on itself by referring to the instance of its own inscription. Also it can stand for the author. The signature of God, thought formally, is the idea of Infinity. Being an idea it belongs to the order of representation and hence to the Cogito. Since it is a representation, there should be some being whose representation it is — an infinite being. This idea allows a smooth passage from the immanence of the Cogito to the transcendence of being. This idea, as it were, unfolds an outside where all created beings can receive the force of objective reality. This allows Descartes to think transcendence itself in the unfolding of the order of representations. In this sense the Cogito is the founding principle of objectivity without becoming an object. Descartes can maintain an egology which is also an ontology. Also, God's signature which is inscribed and preserved under the surveillance of the universal method prevents the duplication of the Cogito; even when it remains under the spell of the evil genius the Cogito is not deceived.

At the ontological level, the signature of God draws the Cogito out of itself on to the path of infinite perfectibility. This is the foundation of the infinitely perfectible method of Descartes. This shows the naivete of treating the idea of method as the arrogance of reason and its founding subject. It is precisely in this idea that Descartes endorses the transcendence of being. He could think about such an universal method because reason has not affirmed its total autonomy and immanence. In Descartes, Reason has not yet mastered its compulsion to seek explanation everywhere. God, who is beyond explanation is the supreme unveiling itself. The Idea of a universal method would be given up not under the attack of skepticism but in reason's return to itself as self-determination and in the completion of the philosophy of the subject. Kant would give up equiprimordiality of the Cogito and God, and turn philosophy to the standpoint of the subject. Infinite perfectibility will not define the form of the Kantian subject. This subject is a finite being which again and again falls back on its own finiteness



### 3.2. From Essence to Sense

and limits only to launch itself into its infinite recuperations. This self-transcendence is not represented by the God-given concept of infinity but by a representation of its own limit — the concept of end.

From this rather long detour through Descartes we learn that the Kant's Copernican revolution is a re-enactment of certain Cartesian themes but with a fundamental difference. The revolution rearranges the same universe around a different center thereby opening many possibilities inconceivable in the old cosmology. Another trajectory of revolution can be traced between Kant and Hume, though we shall not attempt to do so. Only a mimetic conception of thinking can make sense of these philosophical transformations as re-enactment. Instead of taking up this issue at the level of philosophy in general we shall continue to pursue the mimetic moments in the specific transformations that takes place with the Kantian critical turn of philosophy.

Let us get back to our discussion on Kant's shift to sense. As we said space is our outer sense and time the inner sense. They are the sensible forms of intuition and are not sense organs with empirical content. Is this *a priori* status of space and time intuitive? No. We cannot intuit space and time as such. While the *a priori* categories are "deduced" space and time receive only an exposition. The exposition that we find in the Transcendental Aesthetic proceeds by using *reductio ad absurdum* arguments. They get only negative characterization. The Kantian subject being finite is unable to provide evidence for its transcendental principles. Transcendental reflection moves within finitude and discovers only its own finitude. This is the circle of finitude. A reluctant acceptance of this circular character sets the pathos of transcendental philosophy. This becomes evident in the unequal treatment that space and time receive in the Aesthetic. While space gets a detailed metaphysical and transcendental exposition, the metaphysical exposition of time is followed by a very brief transcendental exposition.<sup>15</sup>

The relation between these forms and the subject is presented through a negative

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<sup>15</sup> "By exposition I mean the clear, though not necessarily exhaustive, representation of that which belongs to a concept: the exposition is metaphysical when it contains that which exhibits the concept as given *a priori*" (Kant, *Ibid*, A23/B38).

"I understand by transcendental exposition the explanation of a concept, as a principle from which the possibility of other *a priori* synthetic knowledge can be understood". (Kant, *Ibid*, A25/B40.)

The metaphysical exposition of time seems to be guided by a certain pre-understanding of its nature. It presupposes a certain analogy between space and time. As Heidegger interprets it time is itself a productive pre-comprehension of (as) transcendence. If so time is the ultimate horizon for the clarification of the inner sense. Otherwise the negative tone of the Aesthetic must owe its pathos to a more radical finitude than what has been named under time. There is yet another complication here. In order that time be compared with space we need to know the ideality of space. But the very ideality of space as ideality — already presupposes time. Neither space nor time appear as such. And they are the very form which will limit all "as suchness" from appearance. A philosophy of encircling circles is born.



characterization. About space, Kant says:

If we depart from the subjective conditions under which alone we have outer intuition, namely, liability to be affected by objects, the representation of space stands for nothing whatsoever.<sup>16</sup>

Warning about the “nothing” is repeated in the case of time too.

If we abstract from our mode of inwardly intuiting ourselves — the mode of intuitions in terms of which likewise we take up into our faculty of representation all outer intuitions — then time is nothing.<sup>17</sup>

Time and space are nothing without the subjective conditions. To put it in another way, the subject is what saves space and nothing from being nothing. Space is nothing if we are not liable to be affected by objects. Time too is nothing if we are not affected by ourselves. Time is self-affection. It is only in so far as we are affected by ourselves that we become liable to be affected by objects. To borrow the Heideggerian terminology, in affecting ourselves we open up a clearing in which objects can encounter us. “Time is nothing but the form of our inner sense, that is, of the intuition of ourselves and our inner state.” As we have said the form of the inner sense is also the form of objectivity in general.

Kant characterizes time variously as the form of inner sense, nonsensuous sensuousness, formal condition for phenomena in general, negativity (nonbeingness) etc.. What is involved in these characterizations?

In the Introduction we have discussed the aporetic formulation of time by Aristotle and the threat of simulation it posed for any metaphysical determination of the essence of time. In Aristotle time is subordinated to movement. He introduces the differentiation of ‘before’ and ‘after’ into the continuum of movement without leaving room for a consciousness to which the instant is made present. Before it grinds to an untimely halt Aristotle’s analysis of time introduces a tremor into any effort to think “at the same time”.

Kant takes up this destabilising moment and grafts it on to a different terrain of thinking. The point at which Aristotle’s analysis of time breaks down becomes the motor for Kant’s critical machinery. Time which is an aporia in Aristotle, becomes *a priori* in Kant. Time is no longer subordinated to movement, instead the latter becomes a determination of the former. Time as *a priori* is not defined by ‘before’ and ‘after’. Space is no longer defined by co-existence or simultaneity. Permanence, succession and co-existence are determinations of time.

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, A26/ B42.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, A34/ B51.



Once simultaneity is made a determination of time, the danger it posed for Aristotle in thinking about the essence of time — simulation — is averted. As an *a priori* time will not be made present. In the Third Analogy Kant discusses the principle of determination of the co-existence of appearances. Since “time itself cannot be perceived and we are not, therefore, in a position to gather, simply from things being set in the same time, that their perceptions can follow each other reciprocally.”<sup>18</sup> We can perceive the simultaneous existence of objects only if we presuppose a reciprocal relation of objects to one another. Co-existence is the existence of the manifold at one and the same time. Without the presupposition of coexistence “each perception of an appearance in space is broken off from every other, and the chain of empirical representation, that is experience would have to begin entirely anew with each new object.”<sup>19</sup>

The coexistence of objects in space can be known by presupposing their reciprocal action. This reciprocal relation is the relation of community — “the relation of substance in which the one contains determinations in the other is the relation of influence; and when each substance reciprocally contains the ground of the determinations in the other, the relation is that of community or reciprocity.”<sup>20</sup>

Thus the *a priori* status of time makes the simultaneous existence of a dynamical community of substance — including us and celestial objects — a necessary presupposition of experience. Here the Aristotelian problem about the impossibility of one ‘now’ co-existing with another ‘now’ cannot even be formulated.<sup>21</sup>

The void is inconceivable within the order of the knowable. As Kant says:

Now assuming that in a manifold of substances, as appearances, each of them is completely isolated, that is, that no one acts on any other and receives reciprocal influences in return, I maintain that their *coexistence* would not be an object of a possible perception and that the existence of one could not lead by any path of empirical synthesis to the existence of another.<sup>22</sup>

Not only nature, thought too abhors vacuum. This persistence of the fear of the void from Aristotle to Kant is of importance to our study. Though the problem of simulation as

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, B257.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, A214/B260.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, B258.

<sup>21</sup> However, we shall not fail to notice a question Kant poses towards the end of the discussion on the third analogy, though he does not seem to be interested in pursuing it further — the question of the void. If all parts of space are reciprocally related through continuous influence, is the void possible? Kant lays the question to rest in a rather uncommitted way; “I do not by this argument at all profess to disprove void space, for it may therefore exist where perceptions cannot reach, and where there is, therefore, no empirical knowledge of coexistence. But such a space is not for us an object of any possible experience” (*Ibid*, B261).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, A212/B258.



it was formulated by Aristotle vanishes with Kant, this unattended void would soon disrupt the peaceful coexistence of the dynamic community. Though we shall study these disruptions their relation to the question of the void will be clear only in Chapter 4 where we witness Foucault's attempt to introduce vacuum into a compact ontology in order to articulate a Nietzschean conception of mimesis.

As *a priori* time is not eternity, instead, eternity is only one of the determinations of time. It is the form of the interiority of the finite subject. This is a radical break from the infinite substance of Descartes. But no horizon of essence will limit time. Time itself is the limit. Time does not take determination from anything else. It is the very form with which the subject determines itself before it encounters anything else. Time is the form of self-affection. Emphasising the importance of self-affection for the Kantian philosophy, Heidegger says:

If the power of being solicited as a self belongs to the essence of the finite subject, time as pure self-affection forms the essential structures of subjectivity.<sup>23</sup>

Heidegger's characterization of self-affection "as the power of being solicited as self" tends to conceal the action, suffering and division the self undergoes in affecting itself. Self affection breaks all analytical relations between the "I think" and the "I am". In other words no appeal to the law of non-contradiction would save the self from deception. Instead Kant makes self-affection a synthetic act. The "I think" is the act of the determination of the "I am" which is an empirical ego remains within time. The passive self which undergoes this action represents its own action i.e., "I think" as an Other which acts on it. Time is the form of this determination. It is the same 'I' which occurs in the "I think" and the "I am" because this 'I' affects the form of determination through the synthesis of time and the act of determination takes place immanent to the representation of its own action. On the other hand time divides the act of 'I' and the 'I' who suffers that action. Time divides and conjoins the self.

'I' as the origin of time is divided against itself. Time is this originary division or doubling and also an enjoining. Though time is a form of determination it should not be thought of as a mould imposed on the manifold. Here Deleuze provides us with a clear warning:

For Kant, it is question of the form of time in general, which distinguishes between the act of the I, and the ego to which this act is attributed: an infinite modulation, no longer a mould.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, p. 194

<sup>24</sup>Deleuze, *Kant's Critical Philosophy*, p. ix.



Though time is an immutable form, it is not a mould in which matter can be cast in different shapes. This distinction between the mould and modulation is decisive for the conception of mimesis. The mould in which many copies of the same can be produced has become almost the emblem of all traditional conceptions of mimesis. Kant distinguishes the forming of time from moulding or mimesis. For him, self production is not imitation. It is the production of the origin and not the reproduction of copies. However, as we have seen Kant concedes moulding but only as a determination of time. Plasticity or susceptibility to determination from others is the precondition for simultaneity. Simultaneity is only a determination of the production of the original. We should not confuse time with one of its determinations. In this way the threat of the “simul” is dissolved. Time as modulation is the “moulding” of moulds.

Determination of matter as moulding is one of the favourite fictions of metaphysics. Plato conceived the eternal form as a mould and the production of the empirical as moulding. Now the stage is set for the denigration of mimesis. The carpenter who makes the bed merely fills matter into the ordinary mould. The painter who imitates the empirical bed is at twice remove from the original. Since the imitation of the painting is far too removed from the original, it is difficult, though not impossible to trace it back to the original. This may lead to the proliferation of counterfeits. Once we begin with a mould as the original, criticism of imitation as counterfeiting is easy.

For Kant the immutable form is not a mould. But self-affection as production is the synthesis of oneself as another. Here one would suspect a sleight of hand. Kant takes a problematic area of metaphysics and grafts it into his thinking but by granting it an *a priori* status. As a necessary presupposition it will no longer appear where it used to create trouble. On the other hand through this transformation critique takes up the broken down machinery of metaphysics and makes it work as a machine which works by perpetually breaking down. A machine motored by perpetual crisis — that is critique.

There is something unique about the production of time. In this production, both the producer and the product are perpetually separated from the act of production and the producer is represented in the product. The ‘who’ of self-affection is the “I am”. The “I am” as determined can only answer the “what” question. In the absence of Descartes’ God who put his signature on his creations, who would sign the product of self-affection? The self signs with its own division. The signature is already doubled in the very act of signing. In this sense simulation is the motor of the self. However, it is this very machinery that will now be turned against illusions. What allows Kant to perform this trick is the nature of



representation involved in self-affection. We shall soon see that the modulation of the divided self is made possible by the mediation of a unique representation — the representation of end.

The self is finite because it is ordered to receive being which it has not produced. Hence the intuition is finite. It is not only affected from outside but also from inside. In affecting itself it forms time. Kant finds this self-affecting of the subject by its own act paradoxical — the paradox of the subject. In applying categories to objects we determine our inner sense. But this inner sense itself is not knowable. Self-affection produces knowledge, but is not itself a knowing. The inner sense does not constitute an intuition of what the subject is in itself. It represents to consciousness our own selves only as we appear to ourselves not as we are in ourselves. We have no intuition of our active self but only of the way we are affected by our own acts. The spontaneity of the I think is represented to consciousness as its other.

We cannot have a representation of time as such; all representation of time is indirect and determinate. We usually represent time by a line or an arrow. If time itself does not appear, what is involved in the representation of time by a line? Is there at this point a confusion of time with space? No. First of all the line gives an external character to the inner sense. The line is an outer figurative representation of time.<sup>25</sup> What is the relation of this representation to time?<sup>26</sup>

In drawing the line we allow ourselves to be affected by an external object. We become conscious of the successive character of our understanding. The representation of time is based on the analogy between the inner and the outer senses. The determinations of the inner sense are arranged as appearances in time in the same manner as we arrange those of the outer sense. A motion is implied in drawing the line - as an act of the subject not as a determination of the object. From this we form the concept of succession. We determine our inner sense by attending to this act. But in the inner sense there is no corresponding combination of the manifold. In attending to the act we produce the manifold. Thus we affect the inner sense.<sup>27</sup>

Metaphysics thinks about representation as correspondence. But time, the form of

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<sup>25</sup>Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B154.

<sup>26</sup>Even Aristotle rejects the line as a representation of time because the parts of the line are simultaneous whereas moments of time are successive.

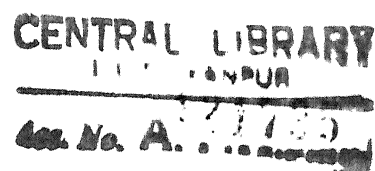
<sup>27</sup>"Motion, as an act of the subject (not as a determination of an object) and therefore the synthesis of the manifold in space, first produces the concept of succession — if we abstract from this manifold and attend solely to the act through which we determine the inner sense according to its form. The understanding does not, therefore, find in inner sense such a combination of the manifold, but produces it, in that it affects that sense". (*Ibid*, B155.)



representation, is represented analogically. It can not be made present. That is, there is an essential indirection in the representation of time. As the form of our inner sense, time is this indirection of representation itself. This indirection introduces a certain contingency in the determination of self. Transcendental philosophy will be razed to the ground if it fails to lift this contingency itself to the order of necessity. The transcendental imagination of *Critique of Pure Reason* is expected to perform this task.

Kant takes great care in distinguishing productive imagination from reproductive imagination. Productive imagination mediates between understanding and intuition through the schema. The schema is a representation of the universal procedure of imagination in providing an image for a concept. This rule is the transcendental determination of time. Reproductive imagination, on the other hand, merely reproduces the images of absent things. As mere imitation it is not productive. Conceding the fictionalizing and playful essence of reason, placing the "as if" at the origin of the "as such" are all overtures to mimesis to appropriate the power of illusions. However, behind this radical gesture which will win much praise in future, Kant takes the decision against mere imitation. But not everything is settled at the moment, and again and again Kant would repeat this gesture in novel ways and with greater sophistication. Finally, as we shall soon see, in the *Critique of Judgement* Kant will grant imitation even in the productive imagination. However, Kant introduces two concepts to dampen the apparent radicalism of productive imagination — the concept of interest of reason and the concept of end. In them are anchored two later critical enterprises; the concept of interest is crucial to the critique of Ideology and the concept of end provide the cutting edge of the Heideggerian enterprise which launches the critique from the standpoint of the end.

### 3.3 Interests and Ends of Reason



We have seen that the speculative use of reason inevitably creates illusions regarding the knowability of the thing-in-itself. Critique cannot remove these illusions; through reflection it can only prevent one from being deceived by them. But how do we explain the genesis of illusions given the 'good' nature of reason? Also even though we can free ourselves from the deceptive power of illusions they seem to survive beneath the threshold of reflective reason, demanding our perpetual vigilance. The concept of interest is expected to solve these problems. According to Kant the origin of illusions is in the pure interest of reason.

'Interest' sensibilises transcendental reason and assigns it to the faculties. "To every faculty of reason we can ascribe an interest, that is a principle that contains the only condi-



tion subject to which its exercise is advanced"<sup>28</sup> It is in its speculative interest that reason delegates its authority to the faculty of understanding, though this faculty would direct this interest towards the thing-in-itself leading to illusions. However, this transgression too is in the interest of reason. In some other faculty reason has a higher of interest which is directed at the thing-in-itself. As Deleuze tells us the illusions of speculative reason are due to a projection of a higher interest — the practical interest of reason in the thing-in-itself — on to the lower. In the faculty of desire, reason and interest coincide and only as the shadow of this unity that any other faculty can have any other interest at all.

Critique presupposes and effects the unity of reason and interest. So far as reason can maintain a hierarchy of interests, illusions can be absorbed into the productive economy of reason. These interests drive reason towards the realization of the transcendental in the 'here and now' of the empirical. But being pure they prevent the collapse of the transcendental in the empirical.

The concept of interest implies the concept of 'end'. Interest is invested in an end. With the concept of end Kant makes a decisive break with the Cartesian metaphysics of the infinite. The finality of man is not unfolded in the idea of the infinite dragging him out of his finiteness to infinite perfection. The concept of end — which only man can form — wraps the order of being around him. While the concept of infinity offered a passage from human representations to the order of being, the concept of end, by representing the limit of representation immanently blocks that passage and folds it into the interior depth of the representations themselves. Man, the end in itself, is this regression of representations to their interior depth — an opacity carved out by a being's essential relation to death. Kant frees the concept of end from being a theological principle and grounds all theological principles in human reason. Human finality is finite and synthetic. It is not conferred on man by God. Nor is it a naive anthropological concept. It is not a concept of understanding nor just another idea of reason. Concepts of understanding determine phenomena with respect to their form. But the content of phenomena remains diverse, indeterminate and contingent. The ideas of reason have only a regulative use with respect to the content of the phenomena, they cannot determine them. The concept of end unlike other ideas of reason has a constitutive role to play.

This is possible because 'end' is an idea not of understanding but of reflective judgement. It is due to the peculiarity of our finite understanding that we have to presuppose a natural purpose as the ground of possibility of physical causality. Our understanding leaves

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<sup>28</sup>Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 120/124.



### 3.4. Violence and Common Sense

the particular contingent and indeterminate. This contingency makes it hard for our understanding to reduce the manifold of nature to the unity of knowledge. We can think of this unity only as an intentional cause — or as “intellectus archetypus”. This does not mean that phenomena are actually caused in this way. The issue is that reflection on the finiteness of understanding leads us to the concept of a purpose or an archetypal understanding as a cause. For our understanding the unity of the whole is dependent on the contingency of the parts.

In accordance with the above peculiarity of our understanding, it cannot happen that the whole shall contain the ground of possibility of the connection of parts (which would be a contradiction in discursive cognition), but only that the representation of a whole would be an effect (product) the representation of which is regarded as the cause of its possibility, but the product of a cause whose determining ground is merely the representation of its effect is called a purpose.<sup>29</sup>

The concept of an archetypal understanding for which representation of the whole as an effect is the cause of that whole, is not the ideal we can even aspire for. But this conception represents the limit of our understanding. It is a limit concept. Limit concepts are not the limits towards which we move asymptotically but the representation of the limit which would enable infinite unfolding of our understanding within legitimate limits. Hence the limit of knowledge is in no way in conflict with the idea of the infinite progress of knowledge.

### 3.4 Violence and Common Sense

However, as if nothing has been settled by all these recenterings and redistributions, in the *Critique of Judgement*, Kant will let reason to play freely across those boundaries between legitimate and illegitimate uses which his previous critiques have so carefully drawn out. If determinate synthesis has created illusions and self-division, Kant now takes the risk of granting a free indeterminate synthesis of reason. The unity produced by this playful synthesis is the common sense. In this synthesis Kant takes the risk of dissolving the distinction between the productive and reproductive imagination — a distinction which was crucial for the First Critique — by allowing productive imagination to be imitative. We shall soon explore the consequences of this radical move.

We have already seen that the community of objects of experience necessitated reciprocal determinability of objects. The very incursion of the form of determinability into self-determination has burst this dream of the total malleability of Being. So, in the Third

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, § 77.



Critique the synthesis of the sense of community is taken up again. This third sense, the common sense (*sensus communis*), is the product of an indeterminate synthesis. This is a non-denotative or reflective synthesis which is not directed at any object. Here no faculty legislates but still all the faculties come to a discordant accord. This is a production with no determinate end. The common sense, the sense of community or communicability as such is the result of a free synthesis.

Traditionally, common sense is contrasted with intellectual sense and regarded as the repository of the pre-given, commonly available fund of wisdom, a capacity to make judgement guided by feeling etc. After relegating feeling to a secondary status in knowledge and in willing (respect) Kant proceeds to account for the pure form of feeling itself. This feeling cannot originate in the faculty of knowledge or of desire because it does not seek the mediation of the rule or the law (though it is not independent of them). Only the faculty of judgement is able to give a pure form to this feeling. This form of feeling is the sensible expression of pure judgement. Aesthetic judgement is attended by this pure feeling. This feeling, since it is pure, is a sense. Also despite its subjective nature and the absence of the concept and the law, it is necessary and universally communicable. Aesthetic judgement, engenders this community of sense and the sense of the community.

But under the *sensus communis* we must include the idea of a sense common to to all, i.e. of a faculty of judgement which, in its reflection, takes account (*a priori*) of the mode of representation of all other men in thought, in order, as it were, to compare its judgement with the collective reason of humanity, and thus to escape the illusion arising from the private conditions that could be so easily taken to be objective, which would injuriously affect the judgement.<sup>30</sup>

Is this the case with judgement in general or only with aesthetic judgement? Here we owe a clarification regarding the place of aesthetic judgement in the Third Critique. In this critique Kant gives a privileged position to aesthetic judgement for understanding the faculty of judgement in general because it poses the toughest challenge for critique. The principle of aesthetic judgement is not derived from the concept of understanding where the particular is subsumed under the universal law. Instead the judgment is called upon to decide whether the case was the suitable one for the application of the rule. This is a general requirement of judgement and it gives rise to serious problems in the case of aesthetic judgement which is applied without the cognition of the object. Hence aesthetic judgements are not aimed at some particular objects, say works of art; rather furnish the principle of judgement in general.

As we know, in the faculty of knowledge the unity of the finite subject is dependent

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<sup>30</sup>Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, § 40.



on the availability of sensible intuitions and in the faculty of desire on the self-division between the 'I' and the 'me'. Space is the pure form of exteriority of objects affecting us and time is the pure form of interiority by which we divide against ourselves in affecting us. However, in pure judgement we represent to ourselves arbitrary forms of possible intuitions - forms reflected by imagination. This form is borne out of the subjective accord of faculties. In this sense aesthetic judgement is reflective and not determinative. It is disinterested, hence interest does not sensibillise it. The concept of end does not determine it. But disinterested judgement produces pleasure and even without determination by the concept of end it reaches finality. This is the uncommonness of the common sense. As Kant says:

The aesthetic judgement rather than the intellectual may bear the name of sense common to all, if we are willing to use the "sense" of an effect of mere reflection upon the mind, for then we understand by sense the feeling of pleasure.<sup>31</sup>

This moment of extreme subjective feeling is called upon to found a community. A community is possible only as a sense but the sense should found a community and universality — a sense which will engender the co-existence of the Other. The outer sense or the inner sense cannot furnish the ground for the community of sense. In every pure judgement there is a promise of a community and an appeal to the other. But this appeal and the promise should be understood in its purity — free of theoretical and practical interest and in the sense of a community beyond society and as an appeal which is a transcendental communication.

This move towards a distinguished community of aesthetic judgement, which is different from the community of scientists and moral agents has been seen as a move towards a subjectivist and non-cognitivist aesthetics. But the vehemence of this charge is ill-founded because this subjectivist moment is the genesis of universal communicability. Redemption of this moment is critical for the possibility of the critique. If the co-existing other is engendered by the passive genesis from within the subject, then critique would relinquish itself to phenomenology. Anything less than this would lead to the invasion by the Other ripping apart the unity of the subject. Here we are at the crossroads of two main currents of future German Philosophy — the absolutism of Hegel and the critique of the subject initiated by Nietzsche. Critique is faced with the option either to turn towards phenomenology — Hegel or Husserl — or to turn against itself, dismembering the subject.<sup>32</sup> It is between these options that we shall read the Third Critique.

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<sup>31</sup> *Critique of Judgement*, §41.

<sup>32</sup> For two impressive readings of Kant at the threshold of Hegel and Heidegger see Flynn, Bernard Charles. "From Finitude to the Absolute: Kant's Doctrine of subjectivity," in *Philosophy Today*, Winter 1985, and Taminiaux, Jacques. "Finitude and Absolute" in *Dialectics and Difference*.



In the Third Critique Kant goes so far as to conceive the subjectness of the subject as indeterminate and free play. With the mastery of an artist he introduces a controlled amount of indeterminacy into determination, and let reason play with the carefully laid out limits and boundaries. Here critique became a masterly play with illusion. This move, risky and bold, is also an attempt to tame play, pin down mimesis and usurp its powers in the service of reason. By moving in the circular orbits of determination reason will imitate all indeterminateness. Let us see how Kant works through this play and what decision and delimitations he makes regarding mimesis.

If the finitude of the subject was its dependence on the sensible intuitions, then the idea of an accord synthesised within the subject anticipates its move to the absolute. The artist-genius, unlike the scientist or the moral agent refuses to accept rules and laws and in this respect imitates God — the creator of nature. The mimetic constitution of the aesthetic subjectivity in the image of the divine subjectivity brings imitation into the very genesis of common sense. Fine art is art only if its form is as free as it were a product of nature. On the other hand something is a work of art only if it is distinguishable from the mere products of nature. Nature is beautiful only when it is seen as art and art is beautiful only when we are conscious about its being art while it has the appearance of nature. Art which takes no rule or model from anywhere can imitate only one thing in nature — the inimitability of the production of nature by the divine artist God.

The production of art imitates the production of nature — the production of production itself. In his freedom, the artist imitates the freedom of God. So art is not the imitation of a product of nature by a product of art. It is an imitation between two productions and between two freedoms.

*Mimesis* here is not the representation of one thing by another, the relation of resemblance or of identification between two beings, the production of a product of nature by a product of art. It is not the relationship of two products but of two productions. And of two freedoms.<sup>33</sup>

The communicability of aesthetic judgement presupposes this mimetic relationship between nature and freedom and between the artist and the divine. Art is production through freedom. It is through the genius that nature dictates its rule to art. Genius is the innate mental aptitude through which nature gives the rule to art.<sup>34</sup> The artist does not give himself a rule; he himself does not know how the rule has entered his head. But this is not imposed on him as this rule giving is a mimesis of freedom. The artist gives himself a rule as nature

<sup>33</sup> Derrida, *Economimesis*, p. 9.

<sup>34</sup> Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, § 46.



gives it to itself. As Derrida says this mimesis is not an imitation of the object by a copy but a play, a mask, an identification with the other on stage. That is the rule playing of the artist is also a role playing — a good imitation without plagiarism and counterfeit.

But the rule-giving of nature does not imply any naturalism of art. First of all “If we call anything absolutely a work of art, in order to distinguish it from a natural effect, we always understand by that a work of man.”<sup>35</sup> A work of art always makes us conscious of its worked or artificial nature but at the same time, only looks as if it is nature. Secondly, though art is production through freedom it is necessarily subjected to some compulsions ; for example in poetry there must be prosody and measure. Without this mechanism the free play of art will become mere play. Man and mechanism distinguish the play of art from the mere play of nature and perhaps also from the play of animals.

In giving art a rule, nature is giving itself a gift, a gift of free and pure productivity, a gift of the power to give. Nature itself is the gift of God to himself. But in giving oneself such a gift one makes oneself the source of infinite production and of value. In this play of production nature “needs” the representation of gift as much as art “needs” the rule of nature. Art is a moment in nature’s relation to itself as pure productivity. Art is the free folding — flexion — of nature on to itself — coinciding with the “as if” of rule/role taking. Mimesis here is a self-folding.

The artist becomes a gift of nature by imitating the gift — giving by giving himself an example — an exemplary, inimitable object. Not the rule of a concept nor law or a model. But an example. The genius represents nature through the exemplar. Example of what? An example of exemplarity — a transcendental example. As the producer of exemplars genius “is entirely opposed to the spirit of imitation.”<sup>36</sup> But his exemplary productions serve as models for his pupils not for copying — in the sense of copying formulae but for imitating, thereby sustaining the tradition of art.

One may think about the logic of this exemplarity within a logic of analogy. The Third Critique contains the doctrine of the symbolism of nature and a whole system of analogies between the rule of art and the moral rule. All that fail to appear in the folding back on itself of the finite subject finally is represented to itself through the logic of analogy. Mimesis is the first casualty whenever philosophy pays respect to analogy. Philosophy seeks to set the ultimate trap for all mimetic play in a masterful imitation of mimesis by erecting at the origin a double, a differential element of the same. It says “yes” to mimesis provided it now occupies the status of the origin it has been trying to imitate. Kant’s appeal to a logic

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, § 43.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, § 47.



of exemplarity is such a trap.

On another path we may notice that the rule giving and role taking across two freedoms is reminiscent of the Cartesian God's presentation of the subject with the idea of Infinite - an idea which draws the subject out of itself and grants its form as perfection. But the Kantian exemplar does not have the form of perfection. A good imitation need not be a perfect imitation. Free play of art is not the perfect play of circus. The form of the exemplar is the form imagination alone can reflect — arbitrary forms of possible intuitions.

The aesthetic subject gives itself a negative presentation of the infinite as the totality of the infinite.

For though the imagination, no doubt, finds nothing beyond the sensible world to which it can lay hold, still this thrusting aside of the sensible barriers gives it a feeling of being unbounded; and that removal is thus a presentation of the infinite. As such it can never be anything more than a negative presentation — but still it expands the soul.<sup>37</sup>

Reason compels the imagination to totalize over the manifold of intuitions. In the faculty of knowledge there is nothing to limit this power of the imagination. However, faced with a sublime object, imagination, driven by reason, comes to the limit of its power and represents to itself the inaccessibility of the idea of totality through the negative presentation of the idea of infinite. The work of art presents this inaccessibility "as if" it is present in sensible nature. Have we not already represented to ourselves the inaccessibility in the idea of reason? This inaccessibility of course remains inexpressible in the idea of reason. The aesthetic idea makes present what is inexpressible in the ideas of reason.

The negativity and expressivity together can be seen as the anticipation of absolute subjectivity and romanticism. Once the inaccessible is represented, even if negatively, it surrenders to the mastery of the circle of self-affection. This negativity does not disturb the accord of faculties, instead the symbolism and analogy reappropriate it into the circle of reason. Art raises this negativity to a higher form of expressivity or sincerity. Though the aesthetic idea creates intuitions to which no concept is adequate, through this inadequacy it renders intuitions (symbolically) adequate to the idea of reason (for which no intuition is adequate) under whose aegis alone we can have any adequation at all between a determinate concept and intuition. In this sense the negativity of art which is the pure form of expressivity or truthfulness does not allow any deception. Mimesis is good imitation attesting truth. It is fortified against all deception. The truthfulness of art brings back all that the critique risked - truth and morality.

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<sup>37</sup>Kant, *Ibid*, § 29.



### 3.5 Imitation and Deception

Neither the concept nor the moral law is a guarantee against deception. Of Course, as we have seen, art itself has a moment of pretence when it makes us believe that it is nature. But this artificiality is denied and conserved in the arti-factuality of the work of art. However, in the world of art there are not only geniuses but also imposters. Imposters deserve only ridicule — a mixed feeling of laughter and disgust.<sup>38</sup> What makes deception ridiculous? Kant gives us an answer where he distinguishes the play of the poet and that of the imposter.

For Kant the value creating pure productivity of the poet alone can play with illusions, without falling prey to it. This pure production appropriates even illusions to its grind-mill. Kant says:

Poetry plays with illusion which it produces at pleasure, but without deceiving it; for it declares its exercise to be mere play, which however can be purposefully used by understanding.<sup>39</sup>

A play with illusions means, play without deception. This is not to say that one tells a lie without the intention of deceiving. The work of art wears its lie upon its sleeves. But this admission is not to be understood as transparency or intentional mastery. Truthfulness or sincerity is not any immediate self-awareness. It is a feeling but not psychological. It is universal and necessary. It is subjective but involves no introspective reporting. It is expressive. Every expression is an imitation of freedom or imitation as free play. But deception is forced imitation. It is the element of force that keeps deceptions and counterfeits outside the good imitation. Like a loud scream sometimes eases the pain, expression frees us not from illusions but from the coerciveness of illusions.

Vigilance against deception is a vigilance against force. Kant compares the poet celebrating the song of the nightingale and a trickster simulating it with a reed or tube in his mouth.

What is more highly praised by poets than the bewitching and beautiful note of the nightingale in a lonely copse on a still summer evening by the soft light of the moon? And yet we have instances of a merry host, where no such songster was to

<sup>38</sup> "But it is quite ridiculous for a man to speak and decide like a genius in things which require the most careful investigation of reason. One does not know whether to laugh more at the imposter who spreads such a mist round that we cannot clearly use our judgment and so use our imagination more, or at the public which naively imagines that his inability to cognise clearly and to comprehend the masterpiece before him arises from new truths crowding in on him in such abundance that details (duly weighed definitions and accurate examination of fundamental propositions) seem but clumsy work." (*Ibid*, § 47)

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, § 53.



be found, deceiving to their great contentment the guests who were staying with him to enjoy the country air by hiding in a bush a mischievous boy who knew how to produce this sound exactly like nature (by means of a reed or a tube in his mouth.) But as soon as we are aware that it is a cheat, no one will remain long listening to the song which before was counted so charming.<sup>40</sup>

Awareness of deception kills aesthetic pleasure. The mental attitude of those who are not moved by this awareness of deception and continue to call the artificial beautiful and take enjoyment in it is to be regraded as coarse and ignoble. Such people fail to see the mark of our moral destination beautiful nature bears on it. They may be moral but in a coarse and ignoble manner. Deception is disgusting. Kant doubts the moral texture of those who do not turn their faces away from deception in disgust.

What exactly is the difference between the imitation by the poet and by the boy whistling through the reed? The former is free play and the later is forced play. The issue here is not regarding the criteria of judging this difference. What is important here is that this difference is to be made with respect to freedom. What disturbs the feeling of pleasure is the violence of force. Violence and ugliness can be described as beautiful so far as they are represented. ("The Furies, diseases, the devastations of war, etc., may (even regarded as calamitous) may be described as beautiful, as they are represented in a picture.") The artistic representation of the object should be marked out from the nature of the object in our sensation. The false imitation of the bird fails to make this distinction.

What is ignoble about deception is not its indirectedness, opacity or insincerity, but its coarse and blunt directedness. It is an act of force not worked upon by the forming hands of the genius. It is this directedness that makes disgust unrepresentable as beauty. Kant says:

There is only one kind of ugliness which cannot be represented in accordance with nature without destroying all aesthetical satisfaction, and consequently artificial beauty, viz., that which excites *disgust*. For in this singular sensation, which rests on mere imagination, the object is represented as it were obtruding itself for our enjoyment, while we strive against it with all our might. And *the artistic representation is no longer distinguished from the nature of the object itself in our sensation*, and thus it is impossible that it can be regarded as beautiful.<sup>41</sup>

It might very well be the case that the hiding of the trickster is part of the imitation - say a Mozart choosing to play in hiding. Or the imitator might have been imitating how a nightingale sings hiding in a bush. Kant would agree that neither of constitute deception

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, § 42.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, § 48. [Italics mine]



in the ignoble sense and can be judged as beautiful. If so what does deception hide? In fact it hides its deception through a certain presentation - a presentation of the forced nature of the pleasure the imitation is extracting from us. The aesthetic pleasure is killed as soon as we become aware about the cheating. What emerges from the bush is not a genius but a monster with reeds and tubes sticking out from his mouth — a deformed being who refuses to take law from nature; a figure of refusal of the nature's gift.

The emergence of the trickster — the producer of the bird's sound — erases that signature which authorizes the product as a work of art. The ventriloquism of the imitator is not signed by the genius. The genius vanishes erasing all the traces of his signature as soon as the imitator emerges from the bush. Kant would grant that imitation is a work of art provided the "real" producer does not make a claim. Work without the ugly figure of the worker; this is how art works for philosophy. What does the coarseness of the worker consists in?

Deceptiveness or untruthfulness of imitation cannot be brought to awareness by referring to facts. It is not the use of techniques, tools or concepts in imitation that makes it deceptive. No art is without rule and restraint. It is not regularity as such but a certain stiffness of regularity that makes imitation insincere.

All stiff regularity (such as approximates to mathematical regularity) has something in it repugnant to taste; for our entertainment in the contemplation of it lasts for no length of time, but it rather, in so far as it has not expressly in view cognition or a definite practical purpose, produces weariness. We are making a judgement on the stiffness of the regularity. On the other hand, that with which imagination can play in an unstudied and purposive manner is always new to us, and one does not get tired of looking at it.<sup>42</sup>

Deception is presented to us as forced regularity. Only a free regularity can indicate to us our moral destination and found *sensus communis*. Force deforms and prevents the idealization involved in expression. Stiffness is also morbidity and the absenting of nature. Simulation is morbid because it annuls the difference between art and the object by abolishing the object. To judge is to distinguish good imitation from forced imitation. The moment of this distinction coincides with the founding of the community of sense. This coincidence can be interpreted exclusively or inclusively. The fate of Critique depends on which interpretation we go for.

As we have already seen neither concept nor the moral law come to our help in reflective judgements. In both, knowing and willing the founding of the community is almost

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, § 22.



synonymous with the extension of the domain of applicability. In both cases this infinite extension is mediated by the concept. The concept is propelled by the idea of reason — the infinite. The extension of the faculty is ensured in their subordination to the idea of reason.

In the case of feeling, the expansion of the soul is not mediated by the concept. This expansion is sudden and immediate and not achieved through incremental addition. However, it is universally communicable and it anticipates a community. What is the time of this synthesis and this community? The third critique does provide an explicit treatment of time. Time as inner sense can not be the time of common sense. However, according to Kant, in reflective judgement, imagination schematises without concepts. At the outset this may appear meaningless. Schematization is temporalization of concepts. If so, what could schematization be without concepts. We have already come across a possible answer — imagination invents arbitrary forms of possible intuitions. How can schematism and arbitrariness go together? Imagination seems to follow rough sketches of schema. But how rough are these rough sketches?

Indeed, imagination receives an orientation in drawing these unformed sketches — even if it arrives after the fact. It is an orientation towards freedom for which there are no models. Imagination follows the sign of freedom inscribed in the heart of the subject. However this sign is not a representation the soul gives to itself in self-affection. The sign of freedom is a gift, a presentation which the soul carries in itself. But the seat of this sign cannot be the “I think”; its directionality cannot be secured in the inner sense of the self-affecting subject. The locus of this sign, common sense, is disruptive of inner sense.

The measurement of space (regarded as apprehension) is at the same time a description of it, and thus an objective movement in the act of imagination and progress. On the other hand, the comprehension of the manifold in the unity — not of thought but of intuition — and consequently the comprehension of the successively apprehended (elements) in one glance is the regress which annihilates the condition of time in this progress of imagination and makes coexistence intuitable. It is therefore (since the time series is a condition of the internal sense and of intuition) a subjective moment of the imagination, by which it does violence to the internal sense; this must be more noticeable, the greater the quantum is which the imagination comprehends in one intuition.<sup>43</sup>

Intuitability of co-existence does violence to time. This violence of the imagination erases the continuum of number and the line — as the representation of time. It is the schema of feeling — the violent inscription of the sign of freedom in the heart of the subject. It is not just the process of its inscription, the sign itself is violence. Since it disrupts the inner

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, § 27.



sense, the latter cannot be the surface of its inscription. In fact the unity of the inner sense of the subject is synthesised only by following this sign - as an after effect. We can call this sign a directive force only at the risk of pushing the sublime closer to the grotesque and the morbid!

Lyotard suggests a fascinating interpretation of this indeterminate synthesis.

And since the pleasure that is the affiancing cannot be inscribed in determination, even in the determination belonging to the temporal schema, this pleasure does not synthesis with itself in the course of time and consequently it forgets itself. It is immemorial. This is also why each pleasure in beauty is a birth.<sup>44</sup>

Intuitability of co-existence as violence to time is a forgetting. After a long detour we are back with the problem of the temporality of co-existence; the coexistence of the "nows". It is the disruption of memory, the irruption of the origin and the birth into time. The passage of the now is an active forgetting and the birth of the new.

What is at the origin of time or at the Origin? Form or force? In so far as the origin is a form, schema or fiction, philosophical appropriation of mimesis goes through without resistance, judging mere imitations and counterfeits. This is what Kant too does. All the radicalism of the First Critique — which won Kant the praise of Heidegger — in placing transcendental imagination at the origin of time, from this perspective, appears to be a strategy to prevent the invasion of violence. Once the presupposition of the malleability of matter is given up, forming and coexistence reveal their violent origin. Kant would be led to admit that the harmony of the community of sense is an accomplishment of violence but a free accomplishment, a freedom inscribed in violence — an euphoric violence. In this sense euphoric violence and the feeling of pleasure which attend reflective judgement are expressive of the prehistory of the subject which is not-yet born, but will be born by a rupturing of time. It is precisely this conclusion that Kant tries to avoid. He does so by populating the origin with more and more fictions and playfulness as if to outsmart mimesis. The timely intervention of a whole system of analogy, negativity and symbolism saves the Kantian critique from all originary violence. However, the relation Kant has drawn between force and deception would open up a new horizon for all future thinking on mimesis.

We shall not end this survey of Kant without taking notice of a singular figure which stands excluded from the community of judges and the kingdom of ends — that morbid and monstrous figure which emerged from the bushes, that trickster boy. Is it not sheer ingratitude, if not bad taste, on the part of connoisseurs of taste to leave the party without

<sup>44</sup> Lyotard, *Who Comes After the Subject?*, p. 233.



acknowledging this ignoble creature at least for those moments of make believe when, though under deception, they really enjoyed the “bewitching and beautiful” note of the nightingale? ‘The great Chinaman of Königsberg’ does not seem to think so. This time it is not women and slaves but these inhuman creatures, which are closer to mechanical contraptions than to man and even to nightingales, which are to be excluded from the kingdom of philosophy. Critique shall not even pass a judgement on them. The adjectives “coarse and ignoble” are reserved not for the trickster but those who enjoy the acts of the trickster.

Critique has arrived at a decision on mimesis. While efforts will be made again and again to redeem mimesis, the voice of the mimic — a mere trickster — will never be heard by those who pose the “question of the subject”. Behind the grandeur of the artist-genius, away from the limelight, in the ob-scene and off stage, the labor of these tricksters, make-up men, lightboys, frame-makers, models, typesetters, proofreaders etc., would remain unnoticed. These mere makers who (like sophists) work for a salary, who only make and never create, would never be allowed to put their signature on the works of art, though without their labour no work will ever be realised.

But soon, from the very wings occupied by these tricksters, mimics and technicians, a profound event will erupt on the stage of Western history, waking up the critique once again from its slumber — the event of technology. Nature as the source or exemplar of free play will disappear from the dreams of philosophy and nightingales and the river Rhine will be arranged in the global network of mechanization. All signs of freedom will be effaced and thinking will be doomed to grope in darkness and silence. Mocked by mechanical reproduction and the mimics, the artist genius will abscond with the very “question of the subject”. And in the doomsday pronouncements of its thinkers, philosophy would come to an end, fulfilling the end in itself of critique. However, thought will learn to stand up in the apocalypse of its historical situation and to pose a decisive, critical response to technology. In the next chapter on Heidegger we shall witness this strange awakening of critical thinking which is possible only at the end of philosophy. There we will have an occasion for a detailed discussion of the relation between critique, the subject and simulation which we have only initiated here.



## Chapter 4

# Heidegger: Critique of Technology

Looking back at the Kantian enterprise we could say that the *Critique of Pure Reason* is a handbook to cope with a certain event in the history of knowledge called science. Here one may wonder why Kant did not give us a similar handbook to meet another challenge humanity would be called upon to face — technology. No doubt there are well-known historical factors which did not allow a confrontation between thinking and technology in the 19th century. It is only in the initial decades of the twentieth century when Europe went to war on behalf of the whole world that technology revealed itself as the crisis point not only of the European civilization but of the entire planet, mobilising a critical machinery which till this date has not ceased turning its weapons against what is perceived as the dangers of technology. Still let us pose this question - fully aware of its essentialist ring; apart from all these plausible historical explanations is there anything in the very Kantian project itself which in any case would have limited the visibility of the critical thinker preventing him from seeing the seeds of the problem of technology?

In fact technology had become a matter of concern much before Kant. Its immeasurable possibilities and demonic powers had come to the notice of all sections of the society. Luddites had by then gone on rampage against the growing spectator of technology. How did all signs of an immanent threat which were so obvious even to the common man escape the critical thinker? We pose this question without promising an answer. This question shall provide the backdrop to appreciate the enormous amount of preparations Heidegger had to make to pose the question of technology in 1953, more than hundred and fifty years after the publication of Kant's first critique.

Much has been said about the inability of Kantian practical philosophy to critically illuminate the concrete moral situations of modern life. It has been accused of being sub-



jectivist and empty. When we raise the question about a slack in Kant's critical vigilance, let us make it clear that we have no intention of joining hands with most of the criticisms raised against Kantian practical philosophy. A certain distance from post-Kantian practical philosophy is essential to appreciate Heidegger's essay on technology as a critique.

There have been two major critical responses to what is perceived as the emptiness or powerlessness of Kantian philosophy. Hegel's critique of Kant and Marx's metacritique of Hegel pave the way for a critical response which leads to the critique of instrumental reason advanced by the Frankfurt School. The second response comes from hermeneutic phenomenology which aims to give content to practical philosophy by bringing together Husserlian phenomenology and an hermeneutically retrieved Aristotelian ethics. Both these traditions endorse a practical turn in philosophy, though they understand this turn differently. The agenda of the Hegelian-Marxist tradition is the practical overcoming of the deformities of reason. The hermeneutic tradition aims at an ontological understanding of our being in concrete situations. Both these traditions have been vigilant against technology in their own ways.

The critique of instrumental reason advanced by the Critical Theory is directed at the bifurcation of reason in modern society and the resulting reification of our inner and outer natures. It takes as its point of departure the splitting of reason into autonomous spheres of social rationalisation. The technological age has been seen as the dominant age of instrumental rationality which leads to the domination of nature and hence man. Horkheimer and Adorno traced this crisis of our historical present to the nature of reason itself. In the works of the contemporary exponents of this tradition, critique of technology becomes a critique of the colonisation of the life world by steering mechanisms like money and media. Despite internal differences this tradition characterises technology by the form of purposive rationality which works with a means-end schema. As we shall soon see Heidegger's critique begins by questioning such instrumental definitions of technology.

For hermeneutic phenomenology, the reason which governs human practice does not consist in the application of a predetermined law to instances. Practical reason moves from the instances to the universal enabling one to find one's bearing in a concrete situation of action. This practical knowledge is an ontological condition for the theoretical knowledge of science and the skill of the craftsman. This hierarchy of knowledges is maintained through a retrieval of the dispositions of the soul available in Aristotle — *sophia*, *episteme*, *techne* and *phronesis*.

The core of the hermeneutic reception of Aristotelian concepts is the distinction



between *poiesis* and *praxis*. Heidegger himself has lent his name to this retrieval as part of his project of fundamental ontology whose significance we shall soon discuss. According to Aristotle, *poiesis* was making whereas *praxis* was doing. While *poiesis* has its end outside of the activity of making - in the image of the product in the mind of the maker, *praxis* has its end within itself. For example, the making of an house is directed at an end separate from the activity itself, But the activity of 'seeing' as *praxis* has its end within that activity itself. While *poiesis* is predictable and definite, *praxis* is ambiguous and open to the fragility of human existence. What is at stake for philosophy in this distinction are the specific dispositions of the soul which put these activities in the light of truth. The mode of knowledge proper to *poiesis* is *techne* whereas that which is proper to *praxis* is *phronesis*. The aim of grafting this distinction onto the phenomenological consciousness was to discover an ontological ground beneath the predominance of the technical activity of our age.

Heidegger's retrieval of this distinction is a controversial issue. *Phronesis* has been translated variously as circumspection understanding, and resoluteness by various interpreters.<sup>1</sup> At the moment we need not enter into this controversy. All that we need to notice is the importance of this distinction and the primacy of the disclosing power of *praxis* — *phronesis* — over the disclosing power of *poiesis* — technology — *techne*. This absorption of ethical categories into the fundamental ontology is not enough to provide a fitting response to technology. *Phronesis* as a special seeing enabling one to do well in a situation does not guide Heidegger in his encounter with technology. This is why we have been insisting on distinguishing Heidegger's critique from that of all *praxis* philosophies. We shall soon see that in his response to technology, Heidegger rehabilitates *poiesis*. He stresses the belonging together of thinking and *poiesis*. However, our contention is that this reconsideration of *poiesis* stops short of reevaluating the relation of thinking to another activity — mimesis.

## 4.1 The Question and the Call

Heidegger's essay on technology is entitled as "Question concerning Technology."<sup>2</sup> This reference to the question is not accidental. It not only shows his hesitation in calling this essay a critique but also gives us a clue to the radical nature of his encounter with technology. What worries Heidegger is the 'posit-ive character of critique. How could a critique be an ontology? In fact Heidegger sees fundamental ontology as a realisation of what should be

<sup>1</sup> Bernasconi, Robert "Heidegger's Destruction of Phronesis", in *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* Vol. XXVIII, Supplement, pp. 127-147, Gadamer, Hans-Gerog, *Truth and Method*, Tamimiaux, Jacques "Poiesis and Praxis in Fundamental Ontology" in *Research in Phenomenology* 17, pp. 137-169.

<sup>2</sup> Heidegger, Martin. "The Question Concerning Technology", in *Basic Writings*.



understood as the ontological intentions of the critique. Since, by the time Heidegger wrote this essay the project of fundamental ontology was no longer in the agenda, the question of Being is not taken up with an eye on the science of Being. By raising this question Heidegger strives to establish a non-posit-ive but not negative relation to Being. Here questioning becomes critical. It proposes a new use of the question-form and a new relationship between thinking and Being as questioning. How does Heidegger deploy the question of the question against ontology and all forms of asking about essence? This question will guide us through this chapter.

We shall follow the path of Heidegger's thinking in three stages. First, we shall study his project of fundamental ontology as it is undertaken in *Being and Time*. Here our focus will be on the transformation of the question of the subject and its import to the critique. Secondly, we shall see how the question of the question turns towards the history of metaphysics. With this the historicity of thought becomes an explicit problem. Heidegger works out the path of thinking to the present through an encounter with the most untimely thinker of the West — Nietzsche. Here Heidegger discovers an immanent relationship between metaphysics and technology. We shall try to show how an immanent critique of metaphysics can now proceed as a critique of technology. However, our main purpose in following the course of this critique is to examine Heidegger's philosophical moves with regard to mimesis. Heidegger thinks through the essence of truth and redeems untruth and concealment as the inessential essence of truth. He characterises the age of technology as the age of the semblant. All these redemptive operations, inimical to metaphysics are organised through a critical retrieval of the Greek *poiesis*. We shall see that the casualty of this retrieval is mimesis. As usual, with Heidegger too, mimesis falls through the very efforts to redeem it. We shall conclude this discussion by taking notice of the limitations of this critique which prevented Heidegger from raising the question concerning the human sciences.

The question of essence has always been the right of metaphysics. Heidegger takes hold of this question not to pursue metaphysics but to overcome it. Heidegger subjects the form of the question to enormous pressure.

Hermeneutics denies the primacy of the consciousness for which every essence is directly evidenced. For hermeneutics essences are 'given' not in evidencing but in interpretation. Hence the hermeneutic quest for essence will proceed as an interpretation of our question of essence. The question about the meaning of Being proceeds as the analytic of Dasein, in whose being, the issue of Being is at stake. To ask about the question of Being is to interrogate the questioner - that entity in whose very being the meaning of Being is an



issue. We cannot interrogate Being directly. First of all in the history of questioning — metaphysics — the original experience of the question as the relation to Being is forgotten. The mode of questioning familiar to us suits only beings. Hence Heidegger takes an indirect and interpretative route to follow this unsuitable but (apparently) tangible form of questioning. When Heidegger asks what is metaphysics, it is only an invitation to question the question itself. The task of thinking is not to find an answer but to recollect a question that has long been forgotten — the question of the meaning of Being.

This questioning as interpretation can be carried only in and through the only mode of questioning available to us — the question of beings. This metaphysical question presupposes that the right way of access to the Being of these entities is secured in advance. It is this access that is to be brought to light. But in which being is this access to the meaning of Being to be discerned? Heidegger arrives at the priority of Dasein not because Dasein has a self-evident access to its Being. Instead he gets the first clue to the priority of Dasein from the formal structure of the question of Being. Dasein's privilege is not as the locus of a self-evident answer but as the structural element of a forgotten question.

The structure of the question has three elements; That which is asked about, that which is interrogated and that which is found out by asking. The first element is the Being of entities and the second Dasein. This turn towards a philosophy of the question from a philosophy of answers has important consequences. First, as Heidegger says "Every inquiry is a seeking. Every seeking gets grounded beforehand by what is sought." Secondly Dasein attains selfhood only in relation to the structure of the question. Heidegger says

Looking at something, understanding and uncovering it, choosing, access to it — all these ways of behaving are constitutive of our inquiry and therefore are modes of Being for those particular entities which we inquirers are ourselves. Thus to work out the question of Being adequately, we must make an entity — the inquirer — transparent in his own being. The very asking of the question is an entity's mode of Being; and as such it gets its essential character from what is enquired about — namely Being. This entity which each of us is himself and which includes inquiry as one of the possibilities of Being, we shall denote by the term Dasein.<sup>3</sup>

Dasein attains privilege as the interrogated entity but unlike the Cartesian Cogito not in the coincidence of the concept and being. First, Dasein is one among several entities. Secondly it is not the locus of an immediately available answer but of a forgotten question. Among so many entities — "there beings" — we ourselves have a priority with regard to the question of Being because interpretation can begin only at a point where the "there being" has the character of a self. Who else but "we ourselves" have this unique character. This

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<sup>3</sup>Heidegger, *Being and Time* pp. 26 -27.



self-relation has the character of a “relatedness backward or forward” which what we are asking about (Being) bears to the inquiry itself as a mode of Being of an entity.<sup>4</sup>

Let us notice the step through which Dasein replaces the Cogito as a privileged locus of inquiry. Dasein is self only to the extent that the there-being is considered with respect to questioning as the essential possibility of its being. But questioning is one of the many possibilities of being. Dasein as ‘us’ has a priority for thinking only to the extent we grant a certain priority to questioning in the many possibilities of Being.

Thus Heidegger draws closer the question of the meaning of Being and the Being of an entity — Dasein’s existence. Dasein already comports itself to that question, a question that quivers between a ‘what’ and a ‘who’.

But in that case the question of being is nothing other than the radicalisation of an essential tendency of Being which belongs to Dasein itself — the pre-ontological understanding of Being.<sup>5</sup>

This question displaces the Cartesian answer — Cogito ergo sum — term by term. All answers to the question of ‘who’ including the ‘I am’ is a potential falsification.

The word ‘I’ is to be understood only in the sense of a non-committal formal indicator, indicating something which may perhaps reveal itself as its opposite in some particular phenomenal context of Being. In that case the ‘not-I’ is by no means tantamount to an entity which essentially lacks ‘I-hood’ but is rather a definite kind of Being which itself possesses as having lost itself.<sup>6</sup>

The primacy of the ‘I’ is ontical. Ontically Dasein is the closest to us. It is what I am. But ontologically it is the farthest to us. Our proximity to Dasein is refused no sooner than it is announced. Even the ontical proximity is a concealment. Here Heidegger is not simply inverting the priority from the ‘I think’ to the ‘I am’. The immediacy usually presupposed in both occurrences of ‘I’ is denied. Dasein is that entity when asked about its ‘who’ replies that ‘I am’. But this reply emanates from the site of a forgotten question of Being.

Dasein has the essential characteristic of ‘mineness’. It means that Dasein is always concerned with its being. It is ontically distinguished by the fact that in its very being that being is an issue for it. This mineness is not an ownership. It is not a property but a possibility. Mineness is the possibility to be itself or not to be itself. Only an entity which relates to itself as this possibility has its existence as its essence. In this sense Dasein’s

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<sup>4</sup> *Being and Time*, p. 28.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p. 35.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p. 152.



existence is a relationship to Being. Since this relationship has the form of a question, issue, decision, it is an understanding. Since ontically it seeks the meaning of being it is ontological. Even though we ask about the 'who' and not the 'what' of Dasein the question itself comes from a forgotten place. All that we know is that it has the form of a question. The guiding thread of the question of Being is a pre-ontological familiarity we ourselves have with the form of a question. In this question, as Ricoeur says, the circle of philosophical questioning and the circle of existence find a point of contact.<sup>7</sup>

We have seen that neither the 'I think' nor the 'I am' have primacy over the 'mineness' of Dasein. It is here that Cartesian subjectivity is doubly undercut. But this leads to a more radical concept of mineness. There is a more primordial necessity that attends the mineness of the Dasein than the Cogito or ergo sum. There is a further horizon against which the meaning of the 'sum' could be explicated. This is the form of the question — a question which individuates the mineness of the Dasein from the 'they' and sets out the differentiation between the authentic and inauthentic Dasein. When delivered over to that question answers like 'I think, I am' amounts to nothing. But Dasein maintains itself in another answer, with absolute certainty - I am mortal.

The Kantian concept of end receives an ontological interpretation here. Dasein is individuated by its own most possibility — death. It is not something that comes to it at the end of its life. It is always in touch with death. It is thrown on itself, gathered into itself in the face of death. It is only as answer to the call of mortality that Dasein goes beyond itself — as transcendence. Dasein tears itself from the 'they' by affecting itself with the possibility of its own death.

In the face of death Dasein is anxious. It is not certainty but anxiety that is the ground of Dasein. In the experience of nothingness in its own being Dasein moves from anxiety to conscience. In resoluteness Dasein hears the call of conscience. In affirming the nullity as its own most possibility Dasein decides — makes the choice — between to be and not to be. This experience is the anticipatory resoluteness of Dasein. This is the existential structure of the critical moment. This is the moment of insertion of Dasein into its essence and of thinking into its situation.

Here the analytic of the question comes to a limit. The question of the meaning of Being is put to Dasein by itself. It does not take this from the domain of the 'they'. However, this is not the case with the call of conscience. The call is not primarily a question. If question is dasein's relation to itself, the call must come from a foreign voice. It is within

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<sup>7</sup>Ricoeur, "Heidegger and the Question of the Subject," in *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p. 223-235.



this gap opened up between the question and the call that the fundamental ontology flounders. Heidegger will keep the question and let the answer — the science of Being — fall. We shall follow this move step by step.

Authentic Dasein is vulnerable to be confused with the solipsistic subjectivity which it claims to replace. Dasein as being in the world is never without a world and the company of others. Dasein's world is always already shared with others. The world of Dasein is a co-world, being-in signifies a co-being with others.<sup>8</sup> Authentic Dasein is not lonely. Aloneness is a deficient mode of co-being. However authentic Dasein shears away from the 'they'. The separation between the 'I' of the Dasein and the 'they' is a thin one. Only a thin wall that separates the they from the uncanniness of the call of conscience of Dasein's authentic Being. To ascribe the possibility of this separation to some power outside Dasein would be illusory. We may disregard this wall and confuse the call of conscience as an injunction from the 'they'. The possibility of this wall and its transgression is given a foundation in the ontological possibility of Dasein itself.

So we need not resort to powers with a character other than that of Dasein; indeed recourse to these is so far clarifying the uncanniness of the call that it annihilates it . . .

Why should we look to alien powers for information before we have made sure that in starting our analysis we have not given too low an assessment of Dasein's Being, regarding it as an innocuous subject endowed with personal consciousness some how or other occurring?<sup>9</sup>

We have already seen the relation between the question and death. Another way of putting this relation is to say that the question of Being arises from a finite transcendence. This question and death individuate the Dasein. For Heidegger death marks the limit of representation and the impossibility of simulation. Dasein cannot die anyone else's death nor can it learn to die from others. One dies without models. There is no access to Dasein's being-towards-death through the death of others because such an access would lead to a situation where "any Dasein may be substituted for another at random, so that what cannot be experienced in one's own Dasein is accessible in that of a stranger."

However, in the call of conscience Dasein is claimed by the voice of such a stranger or a strangeness. Being summoned by this strange call Dasein as being-in-the-world is rendered homeless. But this homelessness, this being-a stranger-in the world is not to be confused with the privacy of a solipsistic self. This call, unlike the question does not transpire in the

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<sup>8</sup>Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 26.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid*, p. 323.



## 4.2. The Question of the Question

structure of the *Jemeinikeit*. What is the foundation of this strangeness? As we have seen Heidegger opposes any attempt to invoke an eternal power which renders Dasein homeless in the world. So the ground of the strangeness of the call should be found on the side of that which is more proximate to us, that is, the question itself. The strangeness of the call stems from the very wavering of the question between the 'who' and 'what' of Dasein.<sup>10</sup>

Once again the question — its indeterminateness between the 'who' and the 'what' — becomes an issue for thinking. Here Heidegger turns towards the history of questioning — metaphysics — to question the very possibility of the question and its indeterminateness. The existential analysis of *Being and Time* is now brought to bear on the question of metaphysics. Heidegger leaves behind the question "Who is dasein" to pursue another one "What is metaphysics".<sup>11</sup> Having offered the preliminary clarification of the ontological import of the question within an existential analytic, Heidegger allows Western metaphysics to introduce itself with its own-most question: "Why there is something rather than nothing?"

## 4.2 The Question of the Question

Having offered a preliminary clarification of the ontological import of the question within an existential analytic, Heidegger allows Western metaphysics to introduce itself with its own-most question: "Why there is something rather than nothing". By posing this question metaphysics concedes the 'nothing' though it concedes nothing to the 'nothing'. Even though it concedes the 'nothing' it wants to know nothing about it. But how can we ask a question about the nothing without making it as some kind of a thing? If logical negation — as an act of the intellect negating the totality of beings — is dependent upon nothing then how can logic - intellect - decide about nothing? Also the intellect has no way of distinguishing the genuine nothing from imagined nothing because nothing lacks any distinguishable traits. Despite all this metaphysics can concede nothingness because as the analytic of Dasein has shown the question itself has its ground in nothingness. Nothing is not a counter concept of beings. It belongs to their original unfolding — as the withdrawal of beings in anxiety. Anxiety is the fundamental occurrence of human existence where nothing is revealed.

What we learn from this simultaneous pursuit of the question of metaphysics and the

<sup>10</sup>The locus of discussion of the call of conscience in the over all structure of *Being and Time* is significant. It appears at the threshold of the transcendental inquiry into time. As time, the gap between call and the question becomes the horizon for the question of Being.

<sup>11</sup>With all hesitation we shall call this move strategical, though Heidegger himself acknowledges its strategic value only within a hermeneutic play. Between the 'who' and the 'what' Heidegger opts for the 'what', but this 'what' will now be directed at the history of the question itself.



question of existence is that Dasein and metaphysics belong together. Metaphysics is not a set of ideas existing in the head of some thinkers. It belongs to the existent man. The “question-begging nature of Dasein cannot be taken for granted by our questioning of Dasein. If our very existence is posed in the question of nothing it must have become questionable through this question.”<sup>12</sup> We, the questioners, are put in question by this metaphysical question. According to Heidegger philosophy, at least what we call philosophy, is “metaphysics getting underway”. Hence we researchers of philosophy cannot make metaphysics present as a whole for our questioning.

Heidegger realises that the question “what is metaphysics?” can be answered only by a detour through the history of metaphysics. But this is not to create a history of ideas to show the evolution of an answer. This history of metaphysics should be interpreted not in terms of the questions and answers of thinkers but with respect to the site of the forgotten question of Being from which all the questions and answers arise. This forgotten origin is most proximally disclosed in the present moment of metaphysics which for Heidegger is the end of metaphysics. It is only with respect to an end that metaphysics can be lifted out as totality for our questioning. Here the task of questioning becomes taking its bearing with respect to the end of metaphysics. Totalising with bearing on the end, the end in itself is the gesture of critique. It is to interrogate metaphysics as a whole with respect to its end that Heidegger approaches Nietzsche. For Heidegger, Nietzsche is the name of an experience of end.

### 4.3 The Dominance of Semblance

Why Nietzsche? Why did Heidegger choose to follow a particular thinker to interpret the present situation of thinking as the end of metaphysics? What is demanded is not an external or pedagogical justification for undertaking a reading of a thinker’s work but the guiding question of his reading as such. Heidegger associates the name of Nietzsche with the end of Western metaphysics and the epoch of technology. We shall show that a recourse to Nietzsche’s texts was necessary for Heidegger to encounter technology.

To recapitulate, we began with the question of the “question concerning technology”. We have seen that the breakdown in the transcendental inquiry on the questioners, led Heidegger to the implication of the question in the history of metaphysics. The failure to make metaphysics as a whole present for thinking now leads him to a hermeneutic detour through the texts of Nietzsche who according to Heidegger is the last metaphysician of the

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<sup>12</sup>Heidegger, ‘What is Metaphysics’ in *Basic Writings*, p. 111.



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West. The texts of Nietzsche preserve a certain experience of the end which is essential for Heidegger's own thinking to orient itself in the wake of metaphysics.<sup>13</sup> What is going to be of most interest to us in this detour is the implication of semblance and simulation in this experience of the end into which thinking needs to step in, in order to pose the question of technology.

We have already noticed Heidegger's concern for the end-related concepts like *poiesis*, *praxis* etc.. The metaphysical question about beings as a whole is always already open to the withdrawal of beings. Now with Nietzsche one realises that metaphysics itself is always already caught up in a draft towards its end; an end which is also an overcoming. We are at the threshold of realising that it is not the beings which withdraw from the tip of the metaphysical question but it is the Being itself that withdraws and the metaphysical question is only a trail of this withdrawal.

The end as the end of metaphysics is thought of as consummation. But this should not be confused with the teleological notions of perfection and progress.

Here consummation doesn't mean a last addition of the still missing part, nor the final repletion of a gap hitherto neglected. Consummation means unimpeded development of all the essential powers of beings, powers that have been reserved for a long time, to what they demand as a whole. The metaphysical consummation of an age is not the mere tapering off of what is already familiar. It is the unconditioned and complete installation, for the first time and in advance of what is unexpected and never to be expected. Compared with what has been up to now, the consummation is novel. Thus it is never seen and grasped by those who only calculate by hindsight.<sup>14</sup>

The end as consummation is an event. It is a discontinuous happening. The idea of an "unconditioned and complete installation" is meant to break away from the teleological concept of progress. It is not conditioned development. This event is not brought about by a calculative subject or will. Thus the culmination is the concept of end pushed to its end. As we have seen the subject of metaphysics has an affinity to the concept of end. Thinking ceaselessly overcome the limits it sets for itself by mapping its exterior in this concept. Only in the kingdom of ends is the limit too is freedom. Heidegger retrieves this concept of end to map

<sup>13</sup>This is the path of thinking from "text to technology" — almost anticipating and also denying the connections Derrida draws between writing and the machine and Deleuze between the simulacra and the machine. If we read the Nietzsche lectures not as yet another interpretation of Nietzsche but as an attempt to think the essence of interpretation then we are able to breach the boundary between hermeneutics and critique. For Heidegger interpretation also meant selection or sorting out of the essential thought of Nietzsche from the mutilated corpse of his texts. Philosophical interpretation selects the essential thinker from the herd of sophist — here from the herd of all those figures who live under the propriety of the name 'Nietzsche'.

<sup>14</sup>Heidegger, Nietzsche volume 3, p. 7



the limits of metaphysics. In this sense the Heideggerian critique moves within the Copernican orbits. However, the event of consummation cannot be located within the chronology of historical events which already presupposes moments in the history of metaphysics. So Heidegger opens a new register — the originaive history to mark the event of the ending of metaphysics.

The history of metaphysics contains great names, arguments and refutations. But as originaive history, metaphysics is not viewed as the viewpoint of any particular person. It is not doctrinal systems or expressions of an age. Metaphysics is all these only as an effect of the originaive history.

If therefore metaphysics, which belongs to the history of being itself, is identified with the name of the thinker (as with Plato's metaphysics or Kant's metaphysics), this is not to say that metaphysics is in each case the accomplishment and property or even the personal distinction of these thinkers as personalities engaged in a cultural activity. The identification means that these thinkers are what they are in so far the truth of Being has been entrusted to them in such a way that they utter Being, that is, utter the Being of beings within metaphysics.<sup>15</sup>

The name "Nietzsche" as the name of a thinker doesn't pick out any individual nor do the works of Nietzsche pick out a collection of easily mutable corpus of texts. The "what" of his thoughts — their contents and the innumerable commentaries, editions and mutilations that organise them fail to individuate the thinker — the "who" of Nietzsche. We shall soon see that for Heidegger Nietzsche's philosophy is a "mere" inversion of Platonism, and Nietzsche, despite all his radical posturing, thought within the same guiding projection of metaphysics. However, within the originaive history of Being the proper name "Nietzsche" has a rigid reference to a unique event.

For Heidegger, Nietzsche is a passage to the present. The question who is Nietzsche means what is our present. What within beings, represented as objects and as state of affairs, basically is what is. This cannot be answered through a historical inquiry.

We never experience what is happening by ascertaining through historical inquiry what is "going on". It can only be thoughtfully known by grasping what the metaphysics that predetermines the age has elevated to thought and word.<sup>16</sup>

Every age is sent to us in a anterior decision. This decision is lifted into thought and words. Only because of this can we take aim at our present through the words of thinkers. Here the ambiguity of the question between the "who" and "what" is accentuated to its limit. Only a

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid* p. 188

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, p. 8.



thinking which faces this indeterminateness of the question in all its acuteness can begin to pose the question concerning technology.

For Heidegger, Nietzsche is an essential thinker and the last metaphysician. Both these terms need clarification. A thinker is an exceptional human being who is destined to think a single thought about being as a whole. They are individuated by the singleness of their thought. An essential thinker thinks in the direction of a decision. The word “decision” gathers into itself an “intimate scission and the most extreme distinction”. Decision involves division and selection — the lifting out of the special. This scission for Heidegger is the ontological difference — the distinction between beings as a whole and the Being. Western metaphysics thinks in the supreme decision that gives predominance to beings. “This decision is never made and executed by a human being. Rather its direction and perdurance decide about man and in a different way about god”. Nietzsche is an essential thinker because he thinks ahead in a decisive sense, not evading the decision.

What should interest us here is Heidegger’s way of handling the ambiguity of Nietzsche. His general strategy is as follows. He shows that Nietzsche merely inverts Platonism. As mere inversions they have the same essence and both remain well within metaphysics. However, they can resemble, stand in relationship of semblance to each other only so far as both of them are illuminated by the revealing of *aletheia*. Mere semblance conceals the truth so thoroughly that we are pushed into the threshold of a new seeing and a new beginning — a threshold according to Heidegger Nietzsche never managed to cross. On the one hand Heidegger reads metaphysical thoughts as semblances and inversions. On the other, he grants a positive power to the simulacra to draw our thinking to the ground of all semblances. In the last instance this power of the simulacra is subsumed under the happening of truth. This strategy is of crucial importance for Heidegger when he takes on technology which works by proliferating semblances.

We shall enter this labyrinth of thought by asking the following question; what is the relation between the unity of Nietzsche’s thought and the epoch of technology? Heidegger’s interpretation of Nietzsche hinges on demonstrating the unity of two central concepts of Nietzsche’s thought — the will to power and the eternal return of the same. This unity can be thought only at the end of metaphysics. Gadamer relates the unity of these thoughts of Nietzsche to Heidegger’s thinking on the epoch of technology.

It is not as if Nietzsche himself ever had the unity of this dispersal clearly before him and had a conceptual grasp of the inner connection between the basic principle of will to power and the noon time message of the eternal return of the same. If I understand Heidegger correctly, this is precisely that Nietzsche has not done, so



these metaphors of his last visions look like mirroring facts with no underlying unity. In any case, such unity Heidegger would say represents the unified ultimate position in which the question concerning being itself forgets itself and loses itself. This is what the technological era signifies, the era in which nihilism in fact brings about an endless return of the same.<sup>17</sup>

Heidegger thinks the unity of the will to power and the eternal return of the same on two registers — the history of metaphysics and the history of Being. The relationship between these concepts is thought in steps. In terms of the history of metaphysics the thought of the eternal return of the same anticipates the thought of the will to power. Within metaphysics they think the selfsame. In thinking the selfsame in the essential unity of these thoughts metaphysics utters the final word. This final utterance betrays the lack for a word for Being. This lack founds nihilism as consummate meaninglessness. Modernity, the era of technology fulfills its essence in raising meaninglessness to a higher power. This consummation itself is the call for a genuine transition in the recollection of the question of Being.

The unity of these crucial thoughts of Nietzsche — the will to power and the eternal return of the same — can be seen only in relation to the history of metaphysics. The agenda of Nietzsche's thinking was the inversion of Platonism — not just the mechanical overturning of the hierarchies of metaphysics but also relocating them. He understood the unity of his thoughts as the collapse of the dichotomies of metaphysics. However, like all other metaphysical thinkers, Nietzsche could not recognise the truth of his thoughts in relation to the guiding projection of metaphysics.

Heidegger interprets the eternal return as the "permanentizing of what becomes". What returns is the self-same within the difference of the other. Return is the self-recapitulation of the identical. The repetition of the self-same is "separated by an abyss from the singularity of the unrepeatable enjoining of all that coheres". This abyss separates the universal accord of beings as a whole from the univocity of Being. Only out of the latter does the difference of the other commence. Within the former, the difference of commencement and the "unstrained voice" of Being can never be heard. Nietzsche thinking is lodged in this abyss between consummation and commencement. This abyss was erected by the guiding projection of metaphysics itself. Nietzsche By trying to obliterate this difference, though of course by staying within the guiding projections of metaphysics, He leads us to the commencement of overcoming metaphysics.

At the threshold of this commencement a grand illusion awaits us. With the commencement of the history of metaphysics the impossibility of hearing the univocity of Being

<sup>17</sup>Gadamer, "Destruktion and Deconstruction" in *Dialogue and Deconstruction*, p. 113.



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gives raise to the historical illusion of the restoration of a primordial unity — an illusory unity sundered from the beginning into the opposition between Being and becoming and distributed in the favorite oppositions of metaphysics. Any attempt to simply cancel the metaphysical oppositions only repeat the illusion of restoring an illusory unity, the illusion of which founds the history of metaphysics. Hence cancellation or inversion of metaphysical oppositions do not take us to the commencement of metaphysics nor enable us to overcome it. To get at the commencement of metaphysics we should think through the gap that separates the metaphysical articulation of the unity of beings from the univocity of Being for which metaphysics has no proper word. Heidegger follows the path of unification of will to power and the eternal return of the same in order to listen to the voice of Being which such a unification conceals — but this listening demands the unification of those thoughts in another register of history.

The unity of Nietzsche's thought can be conceived both within and outside metaphysics. If we go thoroughly beyond metaphysics and question its guiding projection we realise that "that guiding projection places beings as such in the open region of permanence and presense representing them in their universal character with a view to their beingness. The will to power is the permanentising of becoming and hence only a transformed determination of the fundamental projection of the beingness of beings."

We can also see the inner unity of these thoughts in terms of the oppositions of metaphysics. Heidegger goes back to the fundamental distinction which rules the history of metaphysics — between the what-being and the that-being. Will to power says what being is. The eternal return of the same designates the how in which the being that possesses such a "what" character, is. For the Greek, Being *ontos on* meant the true being as the unity of the What-being and the that-being. The semblant — apparent being — manifests being only in a deficient way. For Plato the true being was *eidos*. *Eidos* is an outward appearance in which something shows its form, its whatness. The eidola as outward appearance also shows its form but the form is twisted, contaminated or overshadowed. Even the contaminated appearance is the presence of being but in an impaired way. But with this granting of being to the semblant the that-being tears away from *ontos on* and comes to obtrude in the *me on*. Thus by granting being to the semblant, metaphysics had already obliterated the distinction between the what-being and the that-being at its very commencement. At the end of metaphysics this distinction itself become unrecognisable, though its power grows.

The thoughts of will to power and the eternal return of the same, in the name of overcoming metaphysics, come to the fore to articulate the distinction at the end of meta-



physics when the distinction itself is forgotten. Thus the end of metaphysics brings a cohesion to what is separated in its commencement. The will to power and the eternal return cohere not as two determinations of being but as the selfsame thing. According to Heidegger this selfsameness is most proximate to us but farthest from the univocity of Being. Only when we think through the adopted guises of the selfsameness of these thoughts that we can find the basis for measuring these thoughts in their particularity and metaphysical scope. Only then can we reach the first commencement of metaphysics which empowered the “non-essence” of the *eidos*. Nietzsche’s rebellion against the distinction between the true and apparent world is the fulfillment of this empowering.

This empowerment has its source in the fictionalising power of reason. Nietzsche finds this fictionalising power as the poetizing essence of reason. Poetizing essence does not mean poetic essence. It means the construction and positing of the same. According to Nietzsche, to know is to impose stable forms on the chaotic world to serve our practical needs. Poetizing is pre-formative (and not performative!). Nietzsche intends to use this discovery to think against metaphysics. But according to Heidegger Nietzsche falls back within metaphysics. Plato’s Idea, Aristotle’s categories, Kant’s schema all are interpretations of the fictionalising power of reason. Hence Nietzsche’s schematism is only a parody of the fictions that has already appeared on the stage of metaphysics. Nietzsche’s fiction as it were wears its fictionality up on its sleeve. For Heidegger this is an indication of a prior projection within which all these fictions of metaphysics could appear on the stage.

Once the unity of the will to power and the eternal return is thought in relation to the history of metaphysics, we realise that this unity is an essential one and can be attained only at the end of metaphysics. Articulation of this unity as the selfsameness of these thoughts is the final word of metaphysics. Every thinker in the history of metaphysics has overcome the gap separating the what-being and the that-being and articulated this unity as a signature of their thoughts — Aristotle as *ousia*, Hegel as absolute idea. Nietzsche’s thought is the consummate fulfillment of this unification. Becoming claims the prerogative of Being, whereas the self-empowering of Becoming to the status of being restores to the later its essence. It is peculiar situation. Being raises to preeminence in Becoming coming to claim the former’s status — that is Being in its consummate non-essence. The granting of Being to non-being (the semblant) at the beginning of metaphysics comes to fruition in being itself is assigned its essence as non-essence. Once this is achieved, as Heidegger says “...now there is no way out either in such rending or in a more appropriate fruition.”

The end of metaphysics is the unconditional installation of the semblant or simu-



lacra. Metaphysics, which holds that truth is correctness, cannot safeguard itself from the fatal conclusion that "Truth is a necessary illusion". Truth fixes belief to facilitate the self-surpassing of life. Truth becomes holding to be true. Truth is necessary but what is true about truth need not be true. By saying this are we not committing a hopeless violation of the Law of non-contradiction? Heidegger shows that Nietzsche can think apparently contradictory thoughts because he gets to the ground of the law of non-contradiction and thinks from there. This fundamental law of thought is not a representation or an axiom but an imperative or command issued in the very self-positing and self-surpassing of life. To command is not to make a demand and insist on its fulfillment. It is the the very positing of the right that first of all creates this demand. As erection and installation commanding is poetizing. Nihilism is the domination of this fictionalisation where truth itself is simulated. Truth, when it surrenders its jurisdiction to the commands of life and falls sundered into perspectives becomes the estimation of value. For Nietzsche value is the condition of life. It is the fundamental occurrence of life. Since life is a valuation which gives value to all values, truth so far as it is at the service of life is an estimation. Nietzsche understands nihilism as the decline of the value positing element. He proposes will to power as a new principle for the revaluation of values. For Heidegger will to power is not a way out of nihilism but its culmination. Nihilism is not the collapse of values but the ascendancy of pure evaluation. Once truth becomes estimation of value, that to which it is delivered over — beings as a whole — is left abandoned. Nihilism is this abandoning.

Nihilism is the ascendancy of value over essence; in other words the ascendancy of ethics over ontology. Critique is trapped in an ambiguous position between ethics and ontology. The ambiguity of the question is the ambiguity of critique itself. Heidegger's thinking moves on the threshold between ethics and ontology, at the same time refusing to be called a critique.

The age of technology is the age of nihilism and simulation. Commenting on Nietzsche's statement "Therefore, what is necessary is that something must be held to be true — not that something is true." Heidegger says

This sentence oppresses us in an unsettling and obscure way, even though it could be confirmed in the general historical condition of the planet by way of palpable manifestations in the foreground of our lives — for example, the gigantic propaganda wars, or the character of the sheer facade, of pomp and circumstance, in which all life makes itself known. One cannot dismiss all this as mere externality and superficiality, wrinkling one's nose and remaining with the old, familiar facts; in its speaks the depths of the abyss of the modern essence of Being.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p. 56



The modern essence of Being is the non-essence. Nietzsche as the essential thinker is contemporaneous with this modern age because in his thought the age is raised to words and thoughts, though he himself fails to see this contemporaneity. This is not Nietzsche's fault. When the semblant — the non-essence — comes to dominance all clearing for the question of Being fades away. Strange expressions like "the non-essence" remain silly parodies. In fact, in this age the unquestionability of Being decides what beings are.<sup>19</sup> This unquestionability is not because of any censorship or hiddenness. On the contrary our age does not spare anything from being questioned. Under the guiding projection of metaphysical questioning the question concerning Being is decided so perfectly that there is no room for questioning that projection itself. Within that configuration of Being which Heidegger calls mechanisation beings as a whole have become disposable, malleable and calculable. Here the question of the truth of Being can only "remain in default".

Calculability is raised to the highest exponential when the subject itself yields to mechanisation.<sup>20</sup> The technological age is marked by the installation of man as *subjectum* and as the nodal point of all beings. Subjectivity fulfills itself in the calculability of beings. The subject becomes calculable by dissipating itself into an illusion that "all subjects have disappeared for the sake of some transcendent cause that they will all now serve." This is an illusion because when the subject itself becomes calculable, the order of the calculable loses its center or, to put it in other words, calculability becomes incalculable. According to Heidegger this is the installation of will to power as the last standpoint of the subject.

The technological era is the consummation of the historical articulation of metaphysics and the metaphysical articulation of history as modernity. According to Heidegger, Nietzsche draws the ultimate consequences of this articulation but fails to experience this culmination as a new beginning. As we have already seen this is not due to Nietzsche's negligence because when beings as whole are erected as questionable, Being abandons beings and also the question itself. Questioning only helps to provoke the answering machines of our age.

However, for Heidegger questioning is the piety of thought. Hence his thinking yearns for a new relationship to questioning. This new questioning instead of provoking answers hands over the questioner to that which answers. Let us notice how far we have traveled from the analytic of Dasein which arrogated to itself the right to question the questioner.

<sup>19</sup>Earlier times it was the Sophist who insisted on the unquestionable character of beings. For them questioning was an unfortunate irritation of common sense. In the age of technology philosophy realises itself as its age old enemy — sophistry.

<sup>20</sup>Mechanisation is not to be confused with objectification. This distinction will become clear when we discuss the essay on technology.



Thinking not only has given up such claims but, as a response to the proliferation of answers, is prepared to sacrifice the questioner. About this sacrificial ritual of thinking Heidegger says

Primordial questioning itself never replies. For primordial questioning, the sole kind of thinking is one that attunes man to hear the voice of Being. It is a thinking that enables man to bend to the task of guardianship over the truth of Being.<sup>21</sup>

As primordial questioning thinking is guarding or preserving. To preserve is to guard the permanence. This permanence is not the fictionalised constancy of things. It is maintained by the recollection of the first commencement within which simulacra rose to dominance. In this sense permanence is the preservation of the new. It is this new questioning which guards the truth of Being and also “bends to the task of preserving the new” that would ask the question concerning technology. With this question thinking hand us over to the present.

However, haven't we seen that the modern age as the age of technology marks the coming to dominance of the non-essence of Being. If so how can the question of essence establish any relationship with the essence of technology which is the non-essence? If philosophy can think Being only under the concept of essence then on the face of the unbridled installation of non-essence should it not resign itself to the end of all questioning and also to the end of philosophy? It is not by denying the import of this question but by stepping into its consequences that Heidegger makes the question of essence once again possible. Non-essence should be raised to the thought of Being — or non-essence should come to words awaiting decision. This retrieval is organised in the light of truth as *aletheia*. This step is of at most interest to us because the retrieval of non-essence under the aegis of truth also marks the elision of the issue of simulation from Heidegger's critique of technology. To see all these in detail we need to take another detour through another essay of Heidegger — ‘On the Essence of Truth’.

How does the essence of truth relate to the essence of Being? For metaphysics this relation is too obvious to merit any serious inquiry. Once truth is defined as correctness, it would seem that propositional truth needs no further clarification than adequation to beings. So also is untruth which is nothing more than non-adequation. Untruth as non-genuineness or imitation is removed from the ambit of serious inquiry. Thus within metaphysics, as Heidegger says, “The impression arises that this definition of the essence of truth is independent of the essence of the Being of beings which always includes a corresponding interpretation of the essence of man as the bearer and the executor of *intellectus*”.<sup>22</sup> Metaphysics finds the ground

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, p. 183.

<sup>22</sup> Heidegger, ‘On the Essence of Truth’ in *Basic Writings*, p. 121.



of truth in the subjectivity of man interpreted as a thinking being. "Deceit and dissimulation, lies and deception, illusion and semblance" are ascribed to the fragility and transitoriness of man's essence. For Heidegger the ground of the possibility of truth and untruth is freedom. Freedom is the disclosed of beings in letting them be what they are. Freedom is not human caprice nor the property of man. Untruth cannot be the result of human negligence or incapacity. It must belong to the essence of truth. Untruth is brought into discussion not to account for the possibility of incorrectness. It is a decisive step in posing the question of the essence of truth. Once the obviousness of the essence of truth goes we realise that

Only because truth and untruth are, *in essence, not* irrelevant to one another but rather belong together is it possible for a true proposition to enter into pointed opposition to the corresponding untrue proposition.<sup>23</sup>

Heidegger explains the relation between truth and untruth which receives only a negative characterisation above as "in essence not irrelevant". This relation is one of concealment. Prior to the disclosedness of every being there is the concealment of beings as a whole. Our comportment towards concealing leads to double concealment.

The first concealment occurs in our comportment towards beings. It is the provenance of truth as correctness. In our comportment towards this or that being the guiding projection of beings as a whole within which such comportments take place remain concealed. In such comportment we are brought into accordance with the openness of beings as a whole, though that openness is concealed. This concealed openness remains indefinite and indeterminate and in taking our bearing towards this concealment, the concealment itself is concealed. This double concealment should not be thought of as something covered over by two layers of opaque surfaces. The only way to conceal a concealment is to let that which is concealed to be in the open. That means put the concealment, the mask, on the stage or to let the concealment announce itself. If we pursue this line of interpretation we are very close to treating this double concealment as simulation and a play with truth. However, Heidegger refuses to take this path. For him all these concealings take place within the opening of the revealing of *aletheia*.

In "The Origin of the Work of Art", the two fold concealment is interpreted as refusal and dissembling. The concealment of the totality of beings is their refusal to us. It is the beginning of the lighting of what is lighted. The other concealing occurs when "One being places itself in front of another being, the one helps to hide the other, the former obscures the latter, a few obstructs many, one denies all". Here concealment means a being presents itself

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, p. 130.



as other than it is. Presenting oneself as other is simulation. However, Heidegger permits this dissembling simulation to the openness of truth only as the ground of human errancy.

If one being did not simulate another, we could not make mistakes or act mistakenly in regard to beings; we could not go astray and transgress, and especially could never overreach ourselves. That a being should be able to deceive as semblance is the condition for our being able to be deceived, not conversely.<sup>24</sup>

Heidegger allows us to think this dissembling simulation as a show put up on the stage, but with a proviso.

Concealment conceals and dissembles itself. This means: the open place in the midst of beings, the lighting, is never a rigid stage with a permanently raised curtain on which the play of beings runs its course.<sup>25</sup>

This means: the unconcealment is not a presentation of beings in the openness of a stage with the curtain always up. If the curtain is always up, according to Heidegger there is no concealment. Since there is concealment the curtain should be brought down, at least once in a while, like the wink of the eye. What escapes Heidegger's eye is the concealment that occurs only when the curtain is up — the mimesis that is at work in any staged play.

For Heidegger the double concealment points to "the still unexperienced domain of the truth of Being." Hence the double concealing is called mystery and non-essence of truth. Non-essence is not inferior essence but remain pre-essential. Since non-essence and untruth belong together as the non-essence of truth, all untruth — simulation, deception, imitation etc. — refer to truth. Heidegger gives an account of the unexperienced domain of truth in terms of the essence of man as *Dasein*. Once untruth is interpreted as the errancy of man, his needs and necessities will offer a natural thrust towards releasement. We shall not go into the details of this derivation. We wind up this long detour by noticing that while Heidegger "retrieves" untruth and non-essence as belonging to the truth of Being, the movement from the double concealing to the disclosedness of truth is possible only through the essence of man.

By the time Heidegger poses the question of technology, he no longer trusts the internal thrust of the question to move from concealment to revealing. In the age of technology, where everything is under question, freedom cannot be thought as "becoming question". Philosophy cannot pose the 'pure' question of the essence of truth but has to begin with the question of the essence of technology. The need of this question does not come from

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<sup>24</sup>Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art", *Basic Writings*, p. 176.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid*, p. 176.



the audacity to demonstrate the prowess of the question by applying it to something non-philosophical. The turn towards technology is a response to a crisis in the very mode of philosophical thinking called questioning. It is in this sense that the essay on technology marks a turn in Heidegger's thinking.

#### 4.4 The Question of Technology

The question concerning technology is the question of the essence of technology. How does the question concern the essence? Does the essence have any reciprocal concern for the question? If questioning is the own most mode of thinking, then without this mutual concern between the essence and the question, the latter will not produce anything more than its own echo. As we have seen, the critical turn of thinking was a turn from essence to the sense, so that the question — the question *of/* the subject — will not be lost in the wilderness. Heidegger's own formulation of the question as the question of the meaning of Being — meaning as the “upon which” of any projection of the Being of beings — falls well within this turn. With the “question concerning essence” the Copernican turn, in a sense, is reversed or, as Adorno would have said, is given an axial turn. However, if this is not to be a regression into metaphysics, Heidegger needs to establish the belonging together of thinking and essence. We have already seen his thoughtful preparations for this decisive entry into an openness where thinking and essence belong together.

However, it would seem, the rendezvous between thought and essence cannot be arranged within the immanence of thought. Once metaphysics and its transcendental subject are dismantled, thought is incapable of lifting from within itself the meeting point with essence. In other words the question of essence can be posed only as a question concerning the essence *of something*. Essence of what? Not of any being. Definitely not of the essence of essence! It is here that technology addresses itself to thinking. We begin the question of the essence of technology. Technology and Holderlin become indispensable for thinking.

It goes without saying that the questioning that is taking place here is not a theoretical endeavor. Questioning is thinking and to think is to tread our way through language in an extraordinary way. To question technology is to establish a free relationship with the essence of technology. Questioning opens up human existence to the essence of technology.

Heidegger's first gesture of establishing a free relationship is the declaration that the essence of technology is not technological. This goes against the instrumental and anthropological definitions of technology. However, we wonder which god has whispered this insight into the thinker's ear. Heidegger acknowledges that the instrumental conception is



#### 4.4. The Question of Technology

correct, though in an uncanny sense. This is a self-fulfilling definition which conditions man's efforts to master technology and to use it to meet his needs and also to invent alternative and appropriate technologies. But the correct definition is not the true one.

We are familiar with the distinction between truth as correctness and as *aletheia*. If questioning has to begin with the correct definition of technology as instrumental and proceed towards the true definition by asking about the essence of the instrumental then we expect some clarification regarding the connection between the correct and the true. The definition of truth as correctness or adequation is not simply wrong. In history, truth has never been experienced as anything other than correctness. It is true even for the early Greeks. According to Heidegger they, unlike us, thought in the light of *aletheia*, but never experienced it as such. The definition of truth as correctness should not be thought of as a gradual deterioration of an originally rich experience. We also know, how all attempt to save truth by introducing new definitions — like coherence or even as *aletheia* — is far too besides the point. Again truth as correctness is not one among several definitions of truth. It is the definition present unremittingly from Homer to Nietzsche. What needs to be thought is this very impossibility of defining truth as anything other than as correctness. As correctness truth enters into a certain relation with the revealing of essence. That is why a correct definition can lead us to the true. On the other hand let us be clear, no one, even in the history of metaphysics, has ever entertained such a flat view of adequation, as Heidegger makes it out to be the case. We shall say, Heidegger's charge against other thinkers is bit of an exaggeration. We shall try to show that while Heidegger thinks through the concealment due to the correct definition, the concealment due to this exaggeration of correctness remains unthought. Mimesis would be the work of this unthought. But first of all let us follow the thought as far as it goes.

The instrumental belongs to the regime of causality. According to Heidegger causality, as it was thought by the Greeks had nothing to do with "bringing about" or "effecting". The four folds of the Aristotelian doctrine of causality are four ways of being responsible for the bringing into appearance of the effect. To be responsible in this sense is to start something on this way into arrival. This occasioning of that which is non-present into presenting is *poiesis*. For the Greeks all production as bringing forth out of concealment into unconcealment — not only manufacture but also poetry and nature — was *poiesis*. *Poiesis* is revealing. The essence of technology as production is revealing.

*Techne* was the Greek word for craft as well as production. For the Greeks neither the crafts nor the arts had anything to do with making or with any practical performance.



However, this is no longer our experience. For art and technology are separated by a distance which is specific to our age. Though the essence of technology is *aletheia* the revealing that rules in technology is not bringing forth as *poiesis* but challenging forth. It is not production in the sense of *poiesis* but provocation. Heidegger's term for the revealing that holds sway in technology is "enframing" (*Ge-stellen*). As enframing technology sets up nature and also man to stand by on call for further ordering. Within the frame of *Ge-stellen* they are revealed as standing reserve.

What is the mode of revealing specific to enframing? Enframing is gathering and revealing. The way it sets up nature should be distinguished from another mode of gathering most familiar to metaphysics — form and matter. For Heidegger formed matter is equipment. It fails to articulate the essence of technology as production or as revealing. Equipment is human making and receives its being only within some use. Technology is neither the making of man nor can its essence be understood in relation to use. Moreover, enframing unlike forming is revealing. In this sense the ordering-revealing of technology should be more proximate to the work of art — a framed painting — than to equipment.

The word *stellen* [to set upon] in the name of *Ge-stell* [enframing] not only means challenging. At the same time it should preserve the suggestion of another *Stellen* from which it stems, namely that producing and presenting [*Her- understand Dar-stellen*], which, in the sense of *poiesis*, lets what presences come forth into unconcealment. This producing that brings forth, e.g., erecting a statue in the temple precinct, and the ordering that challenges now under consideration are indeed fundamentally different, and yet they remain related in their essence. Both are ways of revealing, of *aletheia*.<sup>26</sup>

The belonging together of art and technology in their current difference is indicated here. Of course there is no way of directly reviving the Greek experience of having a single word, *techne*. Our task is to think their relation which is articulated within their difference. It is of some interest to note that when Heidegger needs an example for the revealing of *poiesis* Heidegger cites that of "erecting a statue in the temple precinct. In the essay "On the Origin of the Work of Art" too we see him preferring the temple to a painting as an example for a work of art.<sup>27</sup>

The choice, as Heidegger admits, is deliberate and will determine all his future deliberations on *poiesis* and mimesis. He avoids taking painting as an example because

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, p. 302

<sup>27</sup> "The Origin of Work of Art" in *Basic Writings*, p. 168. "We now ask the question of truth with a view to the work. But in order to become more familiar with what the question involves, it is necessary to make visible once more the happening of truth in the work. For this attempt let us deliberately select a work that cannot be ranked as representational art."



as representational art its relation to truth seems to be too obvious. Heidegger opts for a difficult example. However, in the end we realise this choice has made things easy for him. Once painting goes down in his citation list many decisions seem to follow with ease — the decision against mimesis, the decision to install poetry as the essence of art.<sup>28</sup> and also the decision to exclude anything non-human from the sacred precinct of the alethic temples.<sup>29</sup>

We shall bypass this long chain of decisions and directly come to the conclusion that “linguistic work, poetry in the narrow sense, has privileged position in the domain of poetry.” For us, the world-historical people of the age of technology it is not temples which have long since been abandoned by the gods but poetry that preserves the experience of art. Language brings beings to words and appearance. “Only this naming nominates beings to their Being *from out of* their Being.” If this is so, shall we expect to hear the essence of technology speak in the poetry of our times? No sooner than Heidegger tries to name the revealing of technology, language seems to refuse him. The voice of Being begins to sound monotonous.

The fact that now, wherever we try to point to modern technology as the revealing that challenges, the words “setting-upon,” “ordering,” “standing-reserve,” obtrude and accumulate in a dry, monotonous, and therefore oppressive way, has its basis in what is now coming to utterance.<sup>30</sup>

The names the thinker invents for technology do not seem to have much poetry in it. This is not due to the lack of the “poetic essence” of the thinker or of thinking but due to the nature of unconcealment prevailing in technology. When it comes to enframing — the master word for technology — Heidegger realises he is really twisting the arm of language.

According to ordinary usage, the word *Gestell* [frame] means some kind of apparatus, e.g., a bookrack. *Gestell* is also the name for a skeleton and the employment of the word *Gestell* [enframing] that is now required of us seems equally eerie, not to speak of the arbitrariness with which words of mature language are so misused. Can anything be more strange? Surely not.<sup>31</sup>

However, the thinker’s daring to invent unfamiliar words to name the essence of technology is not pointless. Misuse of language has been an old custom of thinking.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, p. 184. “All art, as the letting happen of the truth of beings, is as such, *in essence*, poetry.” According to Heidegger, though there may be other ways of ‘setting into work’ of truth specific to architecture and painting, they all presuppose the saying and naming of language which preserves the essence of poetry. Whether art exhausts the essence of poetry is an open question.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, p. 185. “...language alone brings beings as beings into the open for the first time. Where there is no language, as in the Being of stone, plants, and animal, there is also no openness of beings, and consequently no openness either of nonbeing and of the empty.”

<sup>30</sup> Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, p. 299.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, p. 301.



We, late born, are no longer in a position to appreciate the significance of Plato's daring to use the word *eidos* for that which in everything and in each particular thing endures as present. For *eidos*, in the common speech, meant the outward aspect [*Ansicht*] that a visible thing offers to the physical eye. Plato exacts this word, however, something utterly extraordinary: that it name what precisely is not and never will be perceivable with physical eyes. But even this is not the full extent of what is extraordinary here. For *idea* names not only the nonsensuous aspect of what is physically visible. Aspect (*idea*) names and also is that which constitutes the essence in the audible, testable, the tactile, in everything that is in any way accessible. Compared with the demands that Plato makes on language and thought in this and in other instances, the use of the word *Gestell* as the name for the essence of modern technology, which we are venturing is almost harmless.<sup>32</sup>

The essence of technology comes to language in the word enframing. But this word belongs to a language of error and is open to misinterpretation. However this use of the word is not arbitrary. Of course the reference to the old custom of unfamiliar use by the Greek is not a justification. What clue is Heidegger following when he decides on the word *Gestell* to name the essence of technology? If essence of technology is ambiguous (though in a lofty sense) and Janus-faced, then what approach should we take towards it? Is it that an originary Greek experience of *techne* guides him? Or art?

First of all the question what approach we should take towards technology always comes very late. Man is already challenged forth by technology and in this challenge he is admitted into a revealing which of his own he cannot invent. In this sense the coming to presence of technology is a sending or destining.

... [W]e must experience [*erfahren müssen*] history as the release of Being into mechanisation, a release that Being itself sends, so as to allow its truth to become essential for man out of man's belonging to it.<sup>33</sup>

For Heidegger this experience is an opening to the mystery. But as technology mystery is the danger. Heidegger's approach to this mysterious danger is as follows:

We let technical devices enter our daily life and at the same time leave them outside, that is, let them alone as things which are nothing absolute but remain dependent upon something higher. It would call this comportment towards technology which expresses "yes" and at the same time "no" by an old world, releasement towards things.<sup>34</sup>

Saying simultaneously "yes" and "no" is not to leave anything undecidable. Critique is still a matter of decision and it has not yet come to face undecidability as its own possibility.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, p 301.

<sup>33</sup> Heidegger, *Nietzsche* volume 4, p. 196.

<sup>34</sup> Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, p. 54.



This "yes" and "no" is a decision to use technological devices but without allowing them to wrap, to confuse and lay waste our nature. This is a decision because the purity of our essence or for that matter purity of all essence is at stake in it. The decision should take its place within the ontological difference without obliterating it. But

Every decision bases itself on something not mastered, something concealed, confusing, else it would never be a decision.<sup>35</sup>

This unmastered, concealed something is everything, that is, Being. This unmastery and concealing have been articulated with reference to untruth and non-essence. Truth as correctness or ordering of the orderable gives us illusions of mastery. But this truth and calculability are the sites of non-mastery. It is by erecting the frame of *Gestell* around beings as a whole and by installing will to power as subjectivity that technology starts man upon the way of a revealing on which he has no mastery. What the will to mastery of the age of technology has achieved is the unbridled installation of semblance. Faced with the dominance of semblance, Heidegger turns his thinking in the direction of Being whose revealing withdrawal is the rise of the semblant. To think in front of the simulacrum is to think in the direction of the original. What clue does Heidegger follow to think towards the origin?

The analysis of authenticity as practiced in the analytic of Dasein is not readily applicable here because the questioning has undergone a historical and linguistic turn. If an analytic is still possible it should be directed not at the moods but at the wear and tear of language. It would seem that a certain originary experience of alethic revealing guides Heidegger's thinking. Though such a guidance was proudly claimed by Heidegger what it means to be guided by the past is not an easy matter. The origin is not a point locatable in chronological history. It retreats and returns through the wear and tear of language.

Therefore, in the realm of thinking, a painstaking effort to think through still more primally what was primally thought is not the absurd wish to revive what is past, but rather the sober readiness to be astounded before the coming of the dawn.<sup>36</sup>

The recollection of the originary experience is not meant to be a repetition of the same but the anticipation of the difference. The experience of *techne* or *aletheia* is not a datable occurrence in history. The past of that experience was never present. Nor will the deliverance from enframing arrives at a datable future. As far as man is concerned, what comes to presence primally, manifests to him only the last. However these errors and delays happen only within

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<sup>35</sup> Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 55.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, p. 303.



a constellation of the truth of Being. Even in its errored and delayed epiphany the origin is still capable of giving the thinker a certain clue. No doubt, the word enframing is not the choice of the thinker. It is assigned to him. But, though “who is assigned” is not a question worthy of posing, “what is assigned” needs an answer.

One way out of this problem is to treat Heidegger’s accounts of the originary experience as heroic stories conjured up to serve the critical function of destructing western metaphysics. However, this move will only throw us back to the problem. Either we should be able to give some clue to the ontology of these fictions, or we need to show that Heidegger’s fictionalising never escaped the *abyss* of the fictions it created. We have no indication that Heidegger ever allowed thinking to be implicated in its own self-created fiction. For him fiction, myth, madness, all belong to the order of metaphysics which they try to destabilise in vain.

Another option is to look towards art for the truth of the origin. In the age of simulation to think means to think in the direction of the origin — the original. Here one turns towards art because art is the origin itself. As the origin art has nothing to do with mimesis. However, “whether art may be granted this highest possibility of its essence in the midst of the extreme danger no one can tell.” Art in its essence is the origin and in turning to art we are only giving heed to the origin. Heidegger sees an infallible sign in taking a decision regarding the origin. What is this infallible sign?

This infallible sign is the essence of man. Essence of man is an opening where questions are delivered over to Being; a glowing trail of the retreat and return of the origin. This clue as the essence of man is a temporal clue which leads us through the wear and tear of language — through aberrations and errors which are the assessment of time.<sup>37</sup> Our decisions regarding these errors should take its clue from the *dike* — the dispensation of justice by time. This justice is not a matter of value but essence. If Being is the manifold in which various modes of revealing correspond then justice is the temporality of the synthesis of this manifold. “Revealing is that destining which, ever suddenly and inexplicably to all things, apportions itself into the revealing that brings forth and the revealing that challenges and which allots itself to man”. Origin is the apportioning of revealing. Origin is the opening from where modes of revealing are parceled and sent out. The temporality of the origin is the belonging together of these moments. Our present age is thoughtfully experienced only within this belonging together. Only within this temporalisation of the origin can the “today” be experienced as the experience of the origin. We shall have to show that this experience of

<sup>37</sup>For an interpretation of the temporal clue in Heidegger see: Rapaport, Herman *Heidegger and Derrida: Reflections on Time and Language*.



the present is circumscribed within a decision regarding the fate of mimesis and the essence of man.

In Chapter 2 we have seen that one of the crucial moves of Kant's Copernican turn was to give time status of *a priori*. Heidegger's *Being and Time* indicates the beginning of a project to question this *a priori* status of time. Of course in this work time as temporality is the transcendental horizon for the understanding of Being. However, the interpretation of time by the structure of care marks Heidegger's departure from the transcendental conception of time. Though it retains the "already always" of time the conception of the unity of Dasein as a horizational schema of the ecstasies of time, dismantles the transcendental present of the representing subject. Temporality becomes the happening of transcendence or the self surpassing that Dasein is. This move leads Heidegger to distinguish between Temporality and temporality where the former is the possibility of the temporalisation of the latter or the unity of various temporal ecstasies. From here on the question of time gives way to the question of Being and ontological difference.

If we follow this path of Heidegger's thinking on time we realise that the temporality of the origin cannot be thought of as an *a priori* principle. Still the unity of the various modes of revealing of Being needs to be thought.

Nietzsche made an attempt to think this unity as the eternal return of the same. Heidegger recognises the subversive potential of this thought, but as the principle of the permanentising of the same he treats it as a metaphysical thought about — the last one — beings as a whole. The eternal return is the ultimate representation of the self-same as simulacrum. Return as the self-recapitulation of the same can never produce the difference, that separates beings and Being. As the production of semblance, return obliterates this difference. Here Heidegger turns towards Being which alone can shelter difference.

With the above turning Heidegger misses the opportunity to rethink the eternal return as the production of difference. This resistance to the return and repetition is a resistance to mimesis. Mimesis, for Heidegger would be the repetition that corrupts or weakens the original or the origin. Since Plato it is feared that mimesis affects the participation in Idea, the apportioning of the soul. Perhaps it was never a fear. Mimesis was not taken seriously because, when compared to other dangers it was found less harmful. If mimesis has persisted it is only under the mask of its own weakness.

Here one might ask, doesn't untruth, non-essence and errancy accommodate all these dangers we are ascribing to mimesis. They are conceptual imitations of what mimesis can do to truth and essence! Heidegger is searching for a clue to pursue the origin through



errancy. Mimesis as clue would never even appear to Heidegger. It has already always been excluded from the provenance of thinking in favour of *poiesis*. Our suggestion is that if Heidegger had bothered to rethink the eternal return he would hit upon something more subversive than errancy and a radical clue.. However, within the schema of non-essence and errancy one hits upon a clue all too easily.

The clue is available in freedom itself. One only has to follow the internal thrust the question experiences within the openness of freedom. The lines of this thrust are inscribed nowhere else but on the veil itself.

Freedom is that which conceals in a way that opens to light, in whose *lighting shimmers that veil* that hides the essential occurrence of all truth and lets the veil appear as what veils.<sup>38</sup>

It is always the veil that hides and never the openness. In the theater of Being there is no open stage without curtains. And the veil betrays itself. The shimmer of the veil is the clue. The effervescence that lets the veil glow is the essence of man. The veil shelters not anything behind it — because the veiling is no longer a secret — but only that effervescent essence called man.

This is not to say that Dasein is man. Dasein is the term of a thinking that thinks towards the end of man as his overcoming. However, with Derrida we can see that a certain metaphoricity of Dasein inscribes the figure of man on the very veil that hides him from Being. Derrida illuminates this metaphoricity:

Whence, in Heidegger's discourse, the dominance of an entire metaphoricity of proximity, of simple and immediate presence, a metaphoricity associating the proximity of Being with the values of neighboring, shelter, house, service, guard, voice, and listening. As goes without saying, this is not an insignificant rhetoric .... Several examples of this language, so surely connoted by its inscription in a certain landscape: "But if man is to find his way once again into the nearness of Being [*in die Nahe describe Seins*], he must first learn to exist in the nameless." "The statement "The "substance" of man is *eksistence*" says nothing else but that the way that man in his proper essence [*in seinem eigenen Wesen*] becomes present to Being [*zum Sein anwest*] is ecstatic inherence in the truth of Being"<sup>39</sup>

Such a reading of Heidegger's metaphoricity which delimits the essence of man is possible only if we reflect on philosophical metaphors as such. For this we have to wait till the next chapter where we shall see how such a reflection on metaphor would proceed as an investigation into the conditions of possibility of those sciences which claim to study the

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, p. 306 (italics mine).

<sup>39</sup> Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, p. 130.



essence of man. At the moment we shall notice that Heidegger falls within the Copernican orbits, within which, since Kant, efforts have been made to think the essence of man from his own end. The present, the age of technology, is thought with respect to the end which traces the profile of man.

This figure of man is traced in the movement of the origin. It is the origin which traces man on the surface of the veil. This origin is nothing but the articulation of man upon the depths of his finitude that defines him and also eludes him. Hence this origin is his own articulations that traces the surface — the veil. Foucault, another thinker who would investigate the essence of man describes this origin:

... [T]he level of the original is probably that which is closest to man: The surfaces he traverses so innocently, always for the first time, and upon which his scarcely opened eyes discern figures as young as his own — figures that must necessarily be just as ageless as he himself, though for an opposite reason; it is not because they are always equally young, it is because they belong to a time that has neither the same standards of measurement nor the same foundations as him. But this *thin surface of the original*, which accompanies our entire existence and never deserts it (not even, indeed especially not, at the moment of death, when, on the contrary, it reveals itself, as it were, naked) is not the immediacy of a birth ...<sup>40</sup>

Here origin is that towards which man moves and also the clue for that movement. Man is cut off from the origin but as homeless he dwells in the proximity of the origin. He dwells there on borrowed time — a time which is not his own, but a debt he incurs due to his proximity to the origin and also a gift the origin gives to itself in giving itself to man. Foucault goes on to say:

This is why modern thought is doomed, at every level, to its great preoccupation with recurrence, to its concern with recommencement, to that strange stational anxiety which forces upon it the duty of repeating repetition.<sup>41</sup>

For Heidegger the end is always repeated as the overcoming, the crisis is repeated as the task. This repetition at once precludes the repetition of mimesis and also protects the purity of man's essence. Dasein is defined within the scope of this repetition.

In resoluteness, that is, in self-understanding via its own most peculiar can-be — in this coming-toward itself from its own most peculiar possibility, the Dasein comes back to that which it is and takes itself over as the being that it is. In coming back to itself, it *brings* itself with everything that it is *back again* into its own most peculiar chosen can-be. The temporal mode to which it is as and what it *was* we call [bringing-back-again, that is] *repetition*.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Foucault *The Order of Things*, p. 331, (italics mine).

<sup>41</sup> Foucault, *Ibid*, p. 334.

<sup>42</sup> Heidegger, *Basic Problem of Phenomenology*, p. 287.



This authentic repetition maintains Dasein in the proximity of the origin. In the age of technology another repetition — repetition of simulation — comes to dominance. The overcoming of this age means not its rejection but its repetition within authentic repetition. The critique of mimesis no longer takes a self-present origin as its ground. Instead, critique repeats the repetition of mimesis, but within an originary repetition. Mimesis is beaten by its own weapon. As philosophy always knew mimesis would never pose a threat to reason because it is self-defeating. It readily surrenders its weapons to its enemy as if it was paying back a debt and accepts defeat as if receiving a gift.

Nietzsche knew that our age is installed by an unbridled repetition. But according to Heidegger, Nietzsche surrendered himself to this age and let that repetition sign his own thought. Hence in the very thought of simulation Nietzsche was sucked up into the draft of simulation. Heidegger does not fail to notice that Nietzsche's essential thought — the thought of the eternal return — was also his road to madness.

During the time the overturning of Platonism became for Nietzsche a twisting free of it, madness befell him. Herefore no one at all has recognised this reversal as Nietzsche's final step; neither has anyone perceived that the step is clearly taken only in his final creative year (1888).<sup>43</sup>

For Heidegger the repetition of mimesis is the repetition of becoming which installs itself as Being. The only way to twist free from Platonism, madness and mimesis is to appropriate this repetition of becoming into the withdrawing-coming over of Being — to repeat the same repetition or the repetition of the same but across the ontological difference. This ontological difference separates madness from philosophy and this mad age of technology from releasement. Nietzsche is the last metaphysician and also an essential thinker because he alone drew the consequences of his thinking, i.e., madness.

For Heidegger, Nietzsche's madness was not a mere illness that befell him. Madness was a protective cover, Being, in the wake of its withdrawal, threw around the essential thinker. Thanks to the guardianship of madness Nietzsche stopped short of posing an important question — "Why I am so mad?" In the *Ecce Homo*, out of all those profound questions Nietzsche posed — "Why I am so wise?," "Why I am so clever," "Why I write such good books?" — this question alone is not heard.<sup>44</sup> Had it been posed, this question would have razed to ground not only metaphysics but all that has come to oppose or overcome. It would have burst the bubble of all those nostalgic overtures reason has always been making towards its foggy exterior. More than anything else the timely arrival of madness preempted the final

<sup>43</sup> Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. 1, p. 202.

<sup>44</sup> Nietzsche, *On The Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*.



victory of mimesis. Madness was the trail of withdrawal with which Being had signed the thought of the essential thinker. Had it not happened the unity of the proper name "Nietzsche" would have been shred into pieces and those noontime thoughts would have been passed under the signature of all and sundry — not the overman but the monkey, the dwarf or even the child. Madness saved the work of Nietzsche from being reduced to the mere labor of those creatures which do nothing but imitate.<sup>45</sup> One more time mimesis is defeated by its own weapon — this time by madness.

All these means mimesis is its own undoing. Wherever there is mimesis, even before it comes to be, it is subtracted from itself, and disappropriated of all its means. Wherever it occurs it occurs a little less than itself. Before it could complete a full circle its repetition is taken up and repeated by other repetitions which complete themselves in such elegant circles that, in comparison with them, the mimetic circle appears to be nothing but a bad imitation. Even Plato, as we have seen, never denied being to mimesis. It too produces the self-showing of Being, not as *eidos* but as *eidolon*. According to Heidegger, for Plato "*Eidolon* means a little *eidos*, but not just in the sense of stature. In the way it shows and appears, the *eidolon* is something slight."<sup>46</sup> Plato, the metaphysician, understood this diminution of Being in mimesis by referring it to an original fullness — to the production of God who let the essence emerge without distortion. The mimetic product is something slight, something timid, not because it is a mere reproduction of the Idea but because it reproduces too little.

Heidegger does not measure mimesis against an originary fullness. For him the origin itself is withdrawing. The self diminution of essence is restored to the origin and hence art is no longer at a remove from truth. Still mimesis will collapse under its own lightness. That is why the age of technology as the dominance of the semblant is also its overcoming. Here the semblant imitates not a full origin but an origin which is withdrawing from itself. As an unbridled installation the technological simulacrum would still not measure up to the timidity of the origin. Even in Plato mimesis fell down from stature because of its unbridleness, its imprudence. In fact, for Plato mimesis is not mere reproduction but a certain impropriety inherent in all production or a madness that drives production beyond its limits thereby causing it to suffer a fall in its stature.

Heidegger shows how Plato moves from the production of craftsman to the production of mimetician. All that we need to do is a simple thought experiment. Think about a man who produces everything that every single other craftsman is able to make.

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<sup>45</sup>It is the sign of the protection madness granted to Nietzsche and philosophy in general that all these counterfactuals we have been labouring to pose in this paragraph sounds artificial to our own ears. No wonder if we do not find such thoughts about Nietzsche in the "works" of Heidegger.

<sup>46</sup>Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. 1, p. 186



That would be a man of enormous powers, uncanny and astonishing. In fact there is such a man: *hapanta ergadzetai*, "he produces anything and everything." He can produce not only implements, *alla kai ta ek tes ges phuomena hapanta poiei kai zoia panta ergadzetai*, "but also what comes forth from the earth, producing plants and animals and everything else"; *kai heauton*, "indeed himself too," and besides that, earth and sky, *kai theous*, "even the gods," and everything in the heavens and in the underworld. But such a producer, standing above all beings and even above the gods, would be a sheer wonderworker! Yet there is such a *demiourgos*, an he is nothing unusual; each of us is capable of achieving such a production. It is a matter of observing *tini tropoi poiei*, "in what he produces."<sup>47</sup>

What is the *tropos* or the manner of this production by the wonderworker. This is a *tropos* that prevails in all ways of producing — shoemaking as well as table making. This is a manner of production that is capable of producing "anything and everything". It is the encompassed consummation of all producing. This would mean to produce in this way one has to quicken production to infinite speed. How do we do it? "you can do it quickest if you just take a mirror and point it around in all directions." By turning the mirror "you will quickly produce the sun and what is in the heavens; quickly too the earth; and quickly also you yourself and all other living creatures and implements and plants and everything else we mentioned just now."<sup>48</sup>

Here production as the work of the wonderworker or as the work of a mirror goes so quick and unlimited that it goes mad, run riotous, but in the process suffers a diminution of its stature. A house produced by the work of mirror has less essence not because it is a mere reproduction but because it fails to let the essence appear in an undistorted manner. In the work of the wonderworker the essence of work is taken to its culmination. But at the point of culmination it becomes a mere mirror work which as imitation is twice at remove from Being. Production tries to show off without reserve and ends up darkening and the distorting the coming to presence of Being. This is not the fault of any specific type of production but a danger that prevails in all producing. Production suffers and falls into imitation when its powers are taken to unconditional installation. Mimesis is the madness that prevails in all production. This is why, as Heidegger has shown, in the age of technology, the unbridled installation of production leads to the dominance of semblance.

In the Greek society the semblant came to dominance in art. In our age technology is the unconditional installation of simulacra. What is common to both of them is a certain *tropos* that turns production wild. But what does thinking have to do with this running amok of production. In other words how do production and thinking belong together (especially

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<sup>47</sup>Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. 1, p 176.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid*, p. 177.



since thinking already has that mirror — speculum — turning within it)?

Among the Greek — “who affirmed and founded art as no other occidental nation did!” — the philosopher found himself depreciating art. In our age where technology has installed itself by concealing all other modes of revealing we find the philosopher depreciating technology too by calling it the age of semblance. It appears that the thinker depreciates whatever (according to the thinker) the present society affirms unconditionally. In both the cases the object of criticism is an unconditional production which in the unconditional fulfillment of its essence suffers a diminution of essence. In both the cases this diminution of essence has to do with mimesis — the rise of the semblant. A thinker can decide on mimesis only if he thinks in the direction of Being. Otherwise, as it happened to Nietzsche the thinker too will be carried away by the whirlwind of simulation. According to Heidegger, Socrates knew about this danger and hence begins his inquiry with the confession that “Imitation, viewed as a whole: can you tell me at all what that is? For I myself as well am totally unable to discern what it may be.”<sup>49</sup>

How does one think about imitation with respect to Being? First of all it means to think according to a method, that is, to think “keeping firmly in view the matter itself named in the word.” Method is not a technique nor a statement. Method is a comportment towards Being in which the many sided individual appears as such in the scope of its outward appearance. To think methodically about mimesis is to think about a singularity that has been named under that name. To put it in other words, to think about mimesis is to think about its essence. Once we begin with the question concerning the essence of mimesis, mimesis takes over the inquiry, installing the thought of the mirror, turning it all around, taking essence to its singularity and giving mimesis its inevitable defeat. If one begins with the question of essence, that is if one thinks towards Being two things are guaranteed; first, the singularity and purity of essence, secondly, the diminution of the essence of mimesis. This is why Heidegger begins with the question concerning the essence of technology. Once we pose the question concerning the essence of technology, things move quickly, the mirror of speculation begins to rotate in all directions, at infinite speed; within this movement rotates another mirror — the mirror of mimesis. Each mirror reflects the turning of the other mirror. Two mirrors turning in all directions reflecting each other. Together they form a giant mirror machinery. Each drives the other to crazy heights and each suffers at the hand of the other. From particular production one moves to the production of anything and everything only in so far as thought, its method and its experiment drives production wild. If mimesis is that

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, p. 171.



madness which drives production to the culmination of its essence then it presupposes or imitates the work of thought. Thought can proceed according to method, that is, towards essence only in so far as it is gripped by that madness which drives production wild. The question concerning essence presupposes a certain complicity between thinking and madness, a distancing from Being and worst of all a depreciation of essence. All these happen very quickly. We shall never discover who moves faster — Heidegger or technology, Plato or art. Each drives the other to impossible speeds.

But everything slows down to tangible heights and speeds no sooner than they gain speed. Hence none of these happenings leave any effects on Heidegger's discourse. This work of mirrors and the diminution of Being inscribe a figure on the surface of the mirror — for Plato it was the *demos*, for Heidegger it is man. In Heidegger man's errancy names the diminution of essence. This errancy belongs to his essence. He errors so that essence remain pure. But as Derrida says this errancy is "still too pure, too rigorously delimited".<sup>50</sup> However, for Heidegger, this rigor and its methods, its wonder-work do not seem to distort the essence of that which is asked about — the essence of technology. The mirror work of thinking never blurs the distinction between the essence and that of which it is the essence.

Perhaps we can point out at least two moments where Heidegger could have located such a blurring of the essential distinction, had his thought moved a little slowly — his characterisation of the metaphysical conception of truth as correctness or adequation, and his concept of ordinary time as leveled off authentic time.

As we have noticed, for Heidegger, at no moment in history, truth was experienced as *aletheia*. Through out the history of metaphysics, that is through out history, truth has always been conceived as adequation. In the age of technology truth as adequation comes to unconditional installation. Heidegger's thinking lodges itself in technology's drive towards the unconditional and poses the question about the ground of that which comes to be installed as unconditional — truth as adequation. In this venture thinking is led only by that faint glow of the veil of technology which conceals the concealment itself. Here we shall slow down our thinking and take time to ask a question; Is this characterisation of metaphysical conception of truth as "truth as adequate" a true characterisation of what it attempts to characterise? In the initial stage of our present discussion we have already posed this question in a frivolous manner; Has anyone in the history of metaphysics held such a flat conception of truth as correctness? We shall take the help of Foucault to articulate what we have been struggling with. We quote Paul Veyne describing that moment when Foucault succeeded in posing the

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<sup>50</sup>Derrida, *On Reading Heidegger*, p. 180.



question of truth:

One night when we were talking about the truth of myth, he said that the great question according to Heidegger was to know what was the ground of truth; according to Wittgenstein, it was to know what one was saying when one spoke the truth; "but in my opinion," he added – and I am quoting his exact words, for I jotted them down — "the question is: how is it that there is so little truth in truth?"<sup>51</sup>

In skipping over this essential inadequacy of the non-essence of truth — not the inadequacy of essence that is named by non-essence —, its rarity, has Heidegger's thought already taken a blow from mimesis? If so, this mimesis, its violence will not yield to any question concerning essence and its concealment will not be tracked down by the presence of veils. Its naked violence will not be lured by the glow on the protective clothings of a withdrawing Being nor will it be tricked by such games as madness.

Similar consequences follow if one were to think through Heidegger's conception of ordinary time. Ordinary time was always a target of Heidegger's polemical criticism. According to him, the ordinary conception of time is a series of point-like nows which can be measured by clocks. These point-like nows conceal the making present that abides and withholds. That is, the ordinary sequence of nows are produced by the leveling off or disguise of authentic temporality. Here too the plurality of the ordinary is denied by conceiving it in the image of univocal Being. The figure of man coincides with the line of demarcation of the time of clocks and the time of man which is traced by the moving origin. Thought, once it falls into the trap of man, will not stop articulating his time onto the time of clocks. Clock too is an implement for the production of time and in the hands of the wonderworker the hands of the clock too will gain speed until the clock becomes a mirror that reflects the time of man and suffers a diminution of its essence. But if the ordinary time is plural then thought which comports itself in the direction of Being has no option but to slow down. Critique will not escape the consequences of such a deceleration. The 'present' will no longer reach the point of culmination and crisis and thought will not quite make it to a decision. A certain ontological timidity will constantly thwart the possibility of crisis and revolutions. Does critique has any relevance for us who live our infamous lives in the twilight of hijacked revolutions?

We cannot pose the above question within the orbits of Heideggerian critique. It proceeds a little too fast to take notice of our history of infamy. For Heidegger thinking as questioning gives the dignity of being man. We do not wish to make any effort to save or

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<sup>51</sup>Paul Veyne, "The Final Foucault and His Ethics" in *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 20, No. 1, Autumn 1993, pp. 1-9.



blame Heidegger's thought by posing the question: Is Dasein more or less than man? Given the conditions of sanity of Heidegger's thought, the question of man cannot even be posed within its scope. The word "man", wherever it appear in the works of Heidegger, does not name the essence of man. However, this question of the essence of man will soon become pertinent for philosophical thinking. Here critique takes a new turn as the critique of the human sciences — those sciences which claim to study the essence of man.



## Chapter 5

# Critique of the Human Sciences

Since the 19th century, the human sciences have been the subject matter of philosophical reflection mainly in three ways. (1) As an epistemological issue regarding method. Do human sciences need a method different from that of natural sciences and what is their epistemological status? (2) As an ontological question; What is man as the subject and object of knowledge? (3) As a critical question on the possibility of a self-reflective knowledge with a practical intent to unmask structures of domination and suffering. What interest do these sciences serve?

Knowledge about man became an epistemological issue only with neo-Kantianism. Kant, by showing how synthetic *a priori* knowledge is possible, kept the noumenal outside the purview of knowledge. While Kant took natural science as the privileged locus for the self-analysis of reason, Hegel turned towards History where the Kantian distinctions were overcome. However, with the neo-Kantianism, historical knowledge became a problem for epistemology. A consequent philosophical critique of historical reason found man — the one who makes history and also studies it — , as the condition of the possibility of the human sciences. From this epistemological perspective Dilthey demanded a rigorous and separate method for the human sciences to study their object domain which consists of symbolic artifacts produced by the community of living unities for their own self-understanding. This methodology had to be extracted from the reflexive potential already available at the level of cultures.

However, we may wonder, after the dissolution of the systemic philosophy under what authority philosophical reflection can pose the question about the conditions of that knowledge man produces about himself. Philosophical reflection which sets out to establish the *a priori* conditions for the self-understanding achieved through the human sciences must



first of all find a stand point outside the finite reason of man. Otherwise, knowledge produced by human sciences and philosophical reflection would collapse into one. At this juncture, philosophy has the following options; to preside over its own undoing as neo-positivism, to undercut the unsuccessful epistemological project through an ontological reflection or to strive for a philosophy with practical intent which would proceed as a critical theory of society, establishing a positive relationship between the human sciences and empirical research.

In this chapter we wish to follow an altogether different path to the question of the human sciences. Our claim is that the critique of the human sciences advanced by Foucault, Derrida and Deleuze questions not only the human sciences but also the complicit relationship these sciences maintain with the philosophical projects of epistemology, ontology and reflective critique. In this sense their critique is aimed not against the collapse of the boundary between natural and the human sciences but at the reflective or critical moment which the latter have already come to possess as the condition of their possibility.

Our agenda of studying Derrida, Foucault and Deleuze as critical thinkers compels us to depart from the tastes of contemporary reading habits which approach these philosophers under the problematic titles of post-modernism and post-structuralism. However, at the outset we wish to admit a certain violence involved in our own reading which puts these three thinkers under a single agenda. One might object that, other than a profound Nietzscheanism, their thoughts do not share anything in common. In our discussion we are not going to force their ways of thinking into any artificial unity. Nor shall we attempt to compare the content of their philosophical doctrines. But we will attend to the structure of their thinking sufficiently closely to discover that their concepts are polyvalent and polymorphic and are capable of responding to other concepts across the boundary of the specific projects in which they are deployed. The unity of a critique we wish to ascribe to these thinkers who follow different paths and maintain different heritages and loyalties is of the order of this conceptual affinity. And in our view, if philosophy is a conversation it takes place at the level of the polymorphism of concepts and not at the level of agreement between thinkers on the nature of their projects.

We begin our account with the observation that Foucault, Derrida and Deleuze locate a place beyond man from where thought can launch a critique of the sciences of man. Of these three, only Foucault takes up explicitly the project of a critique of reason as a critique of human sciences. In contrast, Derrida's encounter with human sciences has rarely been direct. However, his persistent effort to describe the fabulous scene of the constitution of Western logos has enabled him to think through and beyond the end of philosophy and the



ends of man. Deleuze is the most the enigmatic of them all. He is a Kantian, a Nietzschean and an unusual empiricist. Perhaps, after Heidegger, it is Deleuze who poses the question "what is thinking" with some urgency. He has offered a rigorous and novel exposition of Kantian critique. At the same time, in *Anti-Oedipus* he parodies critique to crack a joke at the paralogsms of that exemplary "critical science of man" — psychoanalysis.

These three divergent paths of critical thinking encounters the question of human science at one nodal point — the symbol. From Dilthey to Ricoeur philosophy reflection on the human sciences have focused on the symbolic activity of man. For both hermeneutics and structuralism, the object domain of the human sciences consists of symbolic facts. The symbol is regarded as the meeting point of an epistemology of the human sciences and an ontology of human reality. Though philosophical anthropology admits desire and power as exterior to the semantic web of the symbol, it subsumes an archaeology of desire and a dialectics of power under an eschatology of the symbol.

Critique of the human sciences is a critique of the symbol. Only a thinking which anchors itself beyond teleology of the symbol can interrogate the symbol as well as the symbol maker. Philosophical anthropology has made various piecemeal revisions to accommodate this outside under the name of the imaginary, the fictional etc. Desire and power relate to the symbol as it were from outside, but only to inscribe the law of their annihilation within the symbol itself. A total critique of the symbol should refuse such self-defeating partial solutions and strive for a standpoint from where the symbol can be circumscribed. Each of the three thinkers whom we are going to discuss make different gestures at this impossible place. Our task is to describe this theater of philosophical gestures.

These thinkers move beyond the symbol along three different axes - Foucault along the axis of power, Derrida along play and Deleuze along simulacrum. Along these three different directions they ask the same question; how is the excess ascribed to the symbol possible? or what is the condition of the possibility of the symbol? According to the symbolist conception, the symbol is always in excess. Man is the unique being which can use every scarcity as condition for surplus production. Man can reflect on himself — and hence the possibility of critique — because he is not identical to himself. The symbol finds its point of incursion in the splintered unity of man. Without ever coinciding with himself, man is always in an endless circulation in an economy of symbolic production and symbolic exchanges. The critique of human sciences should subject this economy — the economy of the symbol and of finitude — itself to a critique.

All these three thinkers, in different ways discover an economy of the simulacra



which sustain this economy of the exchange. The simulacral economy makes possible and constantly disrupts the symbolic economy. As we shall see the symbol is the trap set by both epistemology and ontology to trap mimesis. The Critique of symbolic economy follows the escapades of mimesis and models itself 'onto' them.

## 5.1 Derrida: The Veil of Light

As we have mentioned in the beginning of this chapter our attempt to read the philosophy of Derrida as critique of the human sciences is a very protracted move undertaken within the scope of our investigation into the nature and limits of critical thinking. We do not claim that the entire corpus of Derridian thinking is animated by a critical intention or is an encounter with the human sciences. We will be occupied with only a few selected texts of Derrida which throw some light on the theme of our investigation. We shall not be surprised if any of those concepts which have become the hall-mark of Derridian thought — text, writing, difference, deconstruction — do not even receive a mention in our reading. In any case, it is not some concepts per se but their critical or — to use a Derridian characterisation — strategic deployment that will interest us.

With all the above precautions we can say that Derrida's critique of the human sciences proceeds as a critique of the economy of the symbol and human finitude which supply a formal schema to the human sciences. Philosophy's relation to the human sciences — as conceived of by Structuralism and Hermeneutics, has always presupposed the symbolic nature of thought. It is this presupposition that comes for Derrida's critique. He cultivates "play" as a critical concept to explore the conditions of possibility of the human sciences which study the symbolising essence of man.

The concept of play is not new to philosophy. Philosophy has reserved this concept for the free and productive creativity which courts illusions, the improper, and non-essence but in controlled measures and in the service of reason. Derrida deploys the concept of play against this familiar philosophical concept of play which betrays the desire of philosophy to master play and to play without risk. His concept of play plays with the guarded play of philosophical conceptuality. In this chapter we try to follow his manoeuvre to drive play to a critical threshold. First, Derrida shows that philosophy tames play by reducing it to a logic of (symbolic) exchange — economy. Secondly he shows that this economy is made possible and at the same time subverted by another logic which is described variously as a logic of supplementarity, logic of contamination and of simulation. We shall try to explicate this subversive logic of the counterfeit.



Derrida's critique intercepts the human sciences at the moment of their self-critique. The metaphysical concept of play is such a moment where the human sciences reflect on themselves. But Derrida finds that this critique is systematic with what it criticises. The self-reflection which is constitutive of the human sciences defines their formal schema as a circle. Derrida critique of the human sciences aims to establish the condition of this circle. Since there is play only because thinking is symbolic, the circle — the circle of exchange — is also the schema for the symbol.

We are familiar with the hermeneutic circle in which our being and understanding feed on each other. Gadamer has interpreted this ontological circle as play. Gadamer invokes play to dismantle the Cartesian Cogito and the notion of Being as self-presence.<sup>1</sup> In order to appreciate Derrida's critique of the hermeneutic concept of play, we need to know the critical-destructive power this concept acquires in the hands of Gadamer. According to Gadamer, play never makes itself present for a consciousness. The experience of play is the experience of being played by the play. In this sense the subject of play is not the consciousness of the player but the play itself. One plays only by risking one's mastery and letting oneself being played by the play. Play is self-presentation for an other and also self-representation. In this sense play is symbolic.

It is in being played that play acquires ideality. Also it is as play that reality is raised to ideality. Play attains ideality by the transformation into structure. Structure is reality raised to truth. "In the representation of play what is emerges". In this sense play acquires ideality by becoming work. This is the hermeneutic redemption of play as transformation into structure and as the event of truth. For hermeneutics, play is a complementary relationship between structure and event.

Structuralism too grants play as structural difference. According to Derrida the concept of play coexists with the thought of the structurality of the structure. In other words the concept of play is formulated in the self-critical turn of structuralist thought. This critical turn has debunked the idea of a self-identical and self present organising center for structures. As Derrida says the moment the structurality of the structure was thought "it was necessary to begin thinking that there was no center and the center was a nonlocus for infinite sign substitutions." Structuralism was always already a critique of presence for which the transcendental signified is not present outside a system of differences. It is this critical turn that supplies the formal schema of the circle to the human sciences. Hence Derrida's critique is directed at this critique always already at work in the human sciences.

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<sup>1</sup>Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, pp. 91-119.



The circle of critique implicates critique in that which it criticises. As Derrida says: "We can pronounce not a single destructive proposition which has not already had to slip into form, the logic, and the implicit postulations of precisely what it seeks to contest."<sup>2</sup> Many great names are members of this critical circle — "Nietzschian critique of metaphysics, the critique of the concepts of Being and truth, for which were substituted the concepts of play, interpretation, and sign (sign without present truth); the Freudian critique of self-presence, that is the critique of consciousness, of the subject, of self-identity and self-proximity or self-possession; and, more radically, the Heideggerian destruction of metaphysics, of onto-theology, of the determination of Being as presence."<sup>3</sup> All these critical discourses are trapped in the circle. Derrida explains this trap with the example of the concept 'sign'. This concept is expected to contest the concept of transcendental signified. This project demands that the concept of sign itself is given up, which of course cannot be done without giving up the critical project itself. The concept of sign is determined by the same oppositions (signifier/signified, sensible/intelligible) that it is trying to contest. Within this enveloping circle we realise that "we cannot do without the concept of sign for we cannot give up this metaphysical complicity without also giving up the critique we are directing against this complicity". This 'paradox' can be extended to all concepts including the concept of play and marks a generalised critical turn that formulates the circle as the schema of critical thinking. Since the object domain of the human sciences consists of symbolic facts the self-critique which is always already underway in language becomes the critical language of these sciences. In this sense the human sciences are 'systematic' with critique. With the birth of the human sciences which coincides with the generalisation of the critique "language invaded the universal problematic" and 'in the absence of a center which was undone by the critique, "everything became discourse". It is this invasion of language and the proliferation of discourse which happened at the expense of (or in complicity with) philosophy that becomes the object of Derrida's critique.

This distinguishes Derrida's critique of the human sciences from those critical projects which take aim at the positivistic presuppositions of these sciences. These latter critiques try to cure the human sciences of a certain blindness to the self-reflective moment which is constitutive of the latter. Here the task of critique is to demarcate the human sciences from natural science. However, Derrida's critique is directed at this moment of critical reflection where philosophy and the human sciences intersect. If we can talk about the task of Derrida's critique, it is to distinguish thinking from the critical reflection that has already been

<sup>2</sup>Derrida, "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences", in *Writing and Difference*, p. 280.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*



underway in the discourse of the human sciences.

The self-reflection of the human sciences consists in the explicit and systematic awareness of the fact that they have to borrow the conceptual resources from the very heritage which they are trying to critique. According to Derrida there may be two ways in which the human sciences bear within themselves their critical moment. One, to proceed as a genealogy of the founding concepts of philosophy. Second, as Derrida explains in detail with the example of Levi-Strauss, is a strategical deployment of the metaphysical concepts to destroy the machinery of which they themselves are parts — to criticise the truth value of concepts while preserving their use value. This option is probably the most daring way of beginning to step outside of philosophy. But this step is so difficult to conceive that those who attempt it are swallowed in metaphysics from which they claim to free themselves, without their explicit awareness. Those who take the second option with explicit awareness play themselves into the circle — like Levi-Strauss who conceived his own discourse on myth as mythomorphic. Derrida warns us about the risks involved in an attempt like Levi-Strauss' when he concedes that his own discourse on myths is mythomorphic:

If the mythological is mythomorphic, are all discourses on myths equivalent? shall we have to abandon any epistemological requirement which permits us to distinguish between several qualities of discourse on the myth?

Between these options Derrida finds no clear application for the idea of choice. However, this does not lead to a night where all cows are black. Derrida observes:

But if no one can escape this necessity, and if no one is therefore responsible for giving into it, however little he may do so, this does not mean that all the ways of giving into it are of equal pertinence. The quality and fecundity of a discourse are perhaps measured by the critical rigor with which this relation to the history of metaphysics and to inherited concepts is thought.<sup>4</sup>

These options without choice lead us to an aporia so far as we fail to thematise the boundary between philosophy and the human sciences and to formulate the question of its transgression. In the absence of such a move the human sciences, which necessarily share a boundary with philosophy, will not become an object of critique. Also the instability imposed on philosophical concepts by the human sciences and the resulting impairment of reflection is mistaken for the finitude of thinking itself. Derrida's warning here is explicit: "For lack of explicitly posing this problem, we condemn ourselves to transforming the alleged transgression of philosophy into an unnoticed fault within the philosophical realm. Empiricism would be

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<sup>4</sup>*Ibid*, p. 282.



the genus of which these faults would always be the species. Transphilosophical concepts would be transformed into philosophical naivetes.”<sup>5</sup> This naivete may manifest itself as the humility of entering the circle of finitude or as the boldness of fallibilistic theorising. The human sciences occupy a space shared by two naivities — the naivity of going beyond philosophy with cavalier ease and the naivity of squaring the circle of finitude.

For Derrida these are two interpretations of interpretation which circumscribe the formal schema of the human sciences. These two interpretations of play or two modes of interpretative play are only two modes of entering the circle. One is a “joyous affirmation of the play of the world and of the innocence of becoming, the affirmation of a world of signs without fault, without truth, and without origin which is offered to an active interpretation.”<sup>6</sup> The other play is “the saddened, *negative*, nostalgic, guilty, Rousseauistic side of the thinking of play....” While the former is the affirmation of play, that is playing without security, the latter is only the thinking of play which is less playing than dreaming the end of play, dreaming full presence, reassuring foundations and the origin. In the *Ends of Man* Derrida brings out the naivete of both these ways of entering the circle into sharp focus.

Between these two paths the idea of choice does not seem to have any clear application. It is between these two circles that a critique of the human sciences meets its object. The critical concept of play should play itself out at the threshold between the joyous naivete of a playful thinking and the melancholic naivete of a thinking of play. The extreme difficulty of this play can be seen if we look at the way play is already at work in the critique of totalisation which has already begun in the reflective moment of the human sciences. Derrida shows that Levi-Strauss, while exploring the limits of totalisation deploys ‘play’ in two different modes; the play of finitude and the play of supplementarity.

Levi-Strauss characterises the limit of totalisation in two ways. One way is to conceive totalisation from the standpoint of finitude. Here he refers to the failure of the empirical endeavor of a finite subject to master the richness of a field. Totalisation can be limited from another standpoint also — the standpoint of play. Here one does not refer to the empirical finiteness of the glance that scans the field but to the very nature of the field which excludes totalisation.

If totalisation no longer has any meaning it is not because the infiniteness of field cannot be mastered by a finite glance or finite discourse but because the nature of the field — that is, language and a finite language — excludes totalisation. This field is in effect that of play, that is to say, a field of infinite substitutions only because it is finite, that is to say, because instead of being too large, there

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p. 288.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p. 292.



is something missing from it: a center which arrests and grounds the play of substitutions.<sup>7</sup>

This movement of play which scuttles totalisation not due to the infinite richness of the field but due to a radical poverty is called supplementarity. Though Levi-Strauss hits upon the notion of supplementarity, within the formal conditions of naivete which makes the human sciences possible, he ends up conceiving it as complementarity. We quote Levi-Strauss from the text of Derrida:

In his endeavor to understand the world, man therefore always has at his disposal a surplus of signification (which he shares out amongst things according to the laws of symbolic thought — which is the task of ethnologists and linguists to study). The distribution of a supplementary allowance [*ration supplémentaire*] — if it is permissible to put it that way — is absolutely necessary in order that on the whole the available signifier and the signified it aims at may remain in the relationship of the complementarity which is the very condition of symbolic thought.<sup>8</sup>

For Derrida the law of symbolic thought is not complementarity nor supplementarity but the circle they form between the two. This circle defines the form of symbolic thought. This form always puts play in tension — with history and presence. Derrida draws out the “algebraic formality” of this tension (whose geometric formality is defined by the circle!). Levi-Strauss reduces history by treating it as a concept always in complicity with the metaphysical determination of Being as presence. Without sufficient critical vigilance this reduction of history can lead to the ahistoricism of the classical type; this move of reduction itself becomes a determinate moment in the history of metaphysics.

Play is also in tension with presence. On the one hand play is the play of presence and absence. But there is a more radical play which is prior to the alternative of presence and absence and on the basis of which Being must be conceived as presence or absence. According to Derrida, Levi-Strauss oscillates between these two notions of play. Now the human sciences should be located in this tension or torsion to which play is subjected. This tension or torsion is the condition for discourse and symbolic thought.

For the philosophy of the symbol play is always free play. We have seen that Kant went to a great extent in granting play in the work of reason but he distinguished this free play from the forced play of deception. It is through symbolism that the transgression of play was reabsorbed into the productive economy of reason. Derrida tries to twist free of this

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, p. 289.

<sup>8</sup> Levi-Strauss, *Introduction a l'oeuvre de Marcel Mauss* in Marcel Mauss, *Sociologie et anthropologie*, quoted in Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, pp. 289-290.



economy of the symbol. He discovers a forced turn, a ursure or a twisting of arms at the origin of philosophical conceptuality. This tormented origin of discourse is interrogated in *White Mythology*. In this essay Derrida uncovers the possibility or impossibility of the philosophical concept of metaphor. As the condition for this concept (which can be generalised to all concepts) Derrida finds a forced production which is also an effacement. This entanglement of an extraction and an effacement at the origin of the free economy of the symbol is the mimetic play which we are trying to locate at the heart of the critique of the human sciences.

Our interest in following Derrida's engagement with metaphor is to see how he deploys a concept to investigate the ground of conceptuality itself. The pair metaphor-concept is one of the most crucial oppositions of metaphysics. Metaphor has been seen as the source of semantic plenitude and also as deviant meaning. Philosophy has wielded the concept of metaphor either to eliminate or to celebrated metaphor. Projects have been initiated either to free the language of Philosophy from metaphors or to challenge philosophy by pointing at the metaphoric origin of concepts. Also, after the linguistic turn of transcendental philosophy metaphor has been regarded as the moment of the critique available within language. Hence, the dream of the philosophy of language to formulate a general metaphorology which can keep a vigilance on the dividing line between philosophy and its exterior — science or poetry. Derrida takes a critical distance from all these projects and tries to formalise and circumscribe the philosophical concept of metaphor. He gets at the origin of conceptuality by investigating this 'philosophical phantom' — the concept of metaphor.

Derrida is often accused of playfully celebrating the primacy of the metaphorical over the conceptual. But much of Derrida's effort goes to show that a general metaphorology which can interrogate all concepts with regard to their metaphorical credentials — to eliminate or celebrate the metaphor — is impossible. At least one concept will escape such a metaphorology — the concept of metaphor. If every concept has a metaphorical origin, the concept of metaphor will have at its origin the metaphor of metaphor.

If one wished to conceive and to class all the metaphorical possibilities of philosophy, one metaphor, at least would always remain excluded, outside the system: the metaphor, at the very least, without which the concept of metaphor could not be constructed, or to syncopate an entire chain of reasoning, the metaphor of metaphor.<sup>9</sup>

Thus in our effort to understand the concept metaphor we come up against the metaphor of metaphor. This curious metaphor would have made the concept metaphor unnamable. This unnamability should have brought thinking to a halt as soon as it begins to pose the

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<sup>9</sup>Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, p. 219.



question of metaphor. The endless self-mirroring should have thrown the concept into an infinite regress.

We are faced here with the typical dilemma of transcendental philosophy. Either there is groundlessness, an abyss without differences or there are self-identical and well-individuated forms. Derrida refuses to choose from these alternatives. He also refuses to settle down for the false humility of a piece-meal criticism with which philosophers often hide in their footnotes. Instead he operationalises the unnamable concept in a new kind of thinking. First of all Derrida shows that this unnamability is not due to the finiteness of thinking nor due to the evasive transcendence of the unnamed but due to the exorbitant relationship between the unnamable and the opposition between metaphor and concept. He suggests that the law of the unnamability of the concept, which we pretend to name by “metaphor”, can be unearthed. Secondly, this law can be generalised across all concepts.

Derrida’s generalisation of the metaphor of metaphor over the whole domain of discourse presupposes the impossibility of a general metaphorology based on the concept of metaphor. Hence he resists all theses of continuity between metaphor and concept. In this sense he is more vigilant against collapsing the difference between them than the defenders of the autonomy of the speculative concept. Derrida emphasises the “materiality” of the concept of metaphor:

There is also a concept of metaphor; it too has a history, yields knowledge, demands from the epistemologist construction, rectification, critical rules of importation and exportation.<sup>10</sup>

All the philosophical projects, whether to eliminate or to celebrate the metaphorical origin of concepts have assumed some form of continuity between the metaphor and the concept. Within the continuist presupposition “the history of a metaphor appears essentially not as a displacement with breaks, as reinscriptions in a heterogeneous system, mutations, separations without origin, but rather a progressive erosion, a regular semantic loss, an uninterrupted exhausting of the primitive meaning: an empirical abstraction without extraction from its own native soil.”<sup>11</sup>

The violent extraction at the roots of abstraction is covering up. The tropological origin of philosophy is under a double erasure. This origin belongs to “the White Mythology”.

White mythology — metaphysics has erased within itself the fabulous scene that has produced it, the scene that nevertheless remains active and stirring, inscribed in white ink, an invisible design covered over in palimpsest.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, p. 264.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, p. 215.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p. 213.



We cannot reach this scene of the origin by merely tracing the etymology of the founding philosophemes like *eidos*, *physis*, *ousia*. The internal, systematic and synchronic articulation of the concepts avoids etymologism. Plato's Idea is different from Hegel's Idea. Nevertheless it is not contingent that both these signified concepts happen to have the same signifier "Idea". What we need is a new protocol of reading to trace the metaphorical trajectory of such philosophemes. Behind the back of the speculative intentions of the thinkers, certain profound effractions are taking place at the roots of the concepts. It is these events that need to be explored. Only such a reading practice can decipher the white mythology of metaphysics. While other interpretative practices read the black inscriptions on the white surface, Deconstruction aims to read the double erasure of the white surface which the inscriptions only cover up. Derrida listens to a strange speech, the murmur, the rustle of the white page; the sign conceals a malice, not of meaning but of a violence inflicted by the pen which proverbially is mightier than the sword.

The first step in this direction is to operationalise the "metaphor of metaphor" which takes us close to an abysmal structure of endless reflections and precisely for that reason paralyses thought. Derrida's attempt is to move as close as possible to this abyss and give an account of its possibility without ever falling into it. To understand this complex manoeuvre, we shall turn towards an excellent exposition of Derrida's handling of abysmal structures by Rudolph Gasche.<sup>13</sup> Gasche shows that the endlessness of Derrida's abysmal structure is not due to the infinite richness of the field to be mastered or due to the finitude of the subject who is trying to master. Instead Derrida conceives the impossibility of totalisation from the standpoint of structural play.

Gasche takes up Derrida's structural play in the background of Hegel's distinction between true infinity and spurious infinity. Hegel distinguishes the claim that a multitude of things can be added *ad infinitum* in a series from the claim that such a series is present to thought as a completed whole. The spurious infinity is always thought of as a series and as progress in an endless straight line. This infinity relates to the finite from the outside and drags it out. Hence as spurious infinity, the infinite is dependent on the finite — its other — and hence is called the finite infinite. Though this infinite gives the impression of progress, in actuality, it is a monotonous extension of the same content — i.e., an endless alternation between the finite and the infinite.

In contrast to this, for Hegel the true infinite is infinite's relation to itself. Instead of a straight line the true infinite proceeds in a circle, which means that only as a circle can

<sup>13</sup>Gasche' Rudolphe, "Nontotalization without Spuriousness: Hegel and Derrida on the Infinite" in *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* Vol 17, No 3, Oct 1986.



a line be wholly presented to thought. The true infinite's relation to itself is immanent in the finite forms and hence is not dependent on them. As true infinity, infinity is submitted to totality. As total, immanent and having no exteriority, the concept of infinity comes to be identical with reason itself. Polysemy, play, and semantic excess, thought in terms of this totalised infinity pose no threat to conceptuality and in fact merge with its horizontal space. So within metaphysics, metaphor of metaphor is to be thought either as spurious infinity and hence outside of thought or as true infinity and hence identical to conceptuality.

Gasche shows that Derrida avoids these two alternatives and constitutes the abyme as a syntactical infinity. By this strange term Derrida means a diacritical self-reference, a doubling, at the level of syntax, without reflexively retrieving itself as a completed whole. Since it is diacritical in nature and constitutive of meaning it does not add any extra meaning to the available series of semantic items. In this sense this supplementary turn or extra turn is non-sense.

The abysmal structure of the metaphor of metaphor is to be conceived as this structural infinite.<sup>14</sup> This new concept not only goes beyond the opposition between the true and spurious infinity but also accounts for this opposition. It is the law that regulates the relation between philosophy's own most concept of true infinity and what is perceived from its inside as its outside, that is spurious infinity. It is only by occupying that liminal region between totalising reason and what that totalisation excludes that Derrida can describe totalisation itself. Derrida can take serious cognizance of all that the theories of metaphor usually push aside as mere metaphor, dead metaphor, mere image, mere copy etc. and formalise the law which constitutes these mere absences as the constitutive absence of speculative philosophy.

The endless play of the metaphor of metaphor as the source of the concept also implies a plurality of origins. Origin as play does not have the archeological simplicity of a proper origin or the virginity of a history of beginning.

Metaphors. The word is written only in the plural. If there were only one possible metaphor, the dream at the heart of philosophy, if one could reduce their play to the circle of a family or a group of metaphors, that is, to one central, fundamental, principal metaphor, but only through the one true metaphor, the assured legibility of the proper.<sup>15</sup>

The non-totalisability of the field, which is radically finite and plural, calls for a syntactical conception of play. As Derrida says "it is because the metaphoricity is plural from

<sup>14</sup>This structural conception of infinity allows Derrida to think the last instance or the end otherwise than as the end of man. In "Ends of Man" Derrida shows the affinity between the concept of end and the essence of man, and the critique of humanism which is undertaken from the end of man. (Derrida, "Ends of Man", in *Margins of Philosophy*, pp. 109-136.)

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid*, p. 268.



the outset that it doesn't escape syntax"<sup>16</sup> As primarily syntactical, metaphor is not a matter of meaning nor is it a matter of use. There is no manual for making metaphor. Nor is it a surplus brought to discourse by the listener. Metaphor can be willed. But the subject of metaphor is a 'structural agency'. It is syntactic, plural and its production is a forced play.

Once he operationalises the phantom of the metaphor of metaphor, Derrida can proceed towards a generalised discourse on the conditions of intelligibility or conceptuality as such. He begins with what appears as excluded from within, then proceeds to raise the insistent return of the excluded to a higher order of necessity than the procedures of exclusion can ever acknowledge. Derrida calls this order of necessity a logic of supplementarity, a logic of contamination, or a logic of simulacra. Within this logic Derrida might say that the essence of metaphor can never escape the metaphorical. This grip over the process of contamination allows Derrida to constitute the legibility of the proper, ie. intelligibility, as an object of investigation. The scope of generalisation available to this logic is wider than the universal generalisability of concepts. It ranges over the moments of contamination of the essences too; those moments which conceptual generalisation erases from within itself. However this straying close to the improper binds the generalised discourse to a radical contingency.

Derrida calls this generalised discourse on metaphor an economy. The insistence on the question of value — the proper, the property — has always brought the discourse on metaphor closer to economy (perhaps to ethics too). When Derrida calls his theory of metaphor an economy it is only a metaphor for theory. Economy as general metaphorsics doesn't proceed by collapsing the distinction between metaphor and concept or between science, poetry and philosophy. It explodes the "reassuring opposition of the metaphor and the proper, the opposition in which the one and the other have not done anything but reflect and refer to each other in their radiance."

Derrida finds the value generating differential which makes all exchanges, transference and translations possible in the violence of forced metaphors - catachresis. The economy of metaphor is not put to work by the consumption of an initial plenitude or by the demands of an initial lack. Both these conceptions, as we know from a similar situation in classical economy, posit an equilibrium as finality. Like Nietzsche, Derrida detests the sciences of equilibrium. The play of force in the originary catachrestic movement is to be thought according to the structural infinite and hence defies all totalisation into a final equilibrium. Economy obeys no archaeology or eschatology. Within this economy, *ursure* — another metaphor for the metaphorical production — attains the status of a critical concept to account for the

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, p. 268.



differential production of value as well as the mythology of the proper. No exchange can account for the running of this economy. What has been named by usure, syntactic play, plural origin is a moment of madness that disrupts the economy of exchange and also accounts for its possibility. Derrida formalises the logic of this madness, as we have seen, within the logics of the supplement, contamination and simulation.

Derrida uses the word 'supplement' at least in two significantly different senses, though the supplement does not work by polysemy. — addition and replacement. In the first sense;

The supplement adds itself, it is a surplus, a plenitude enriching another plenitude, *the fullest measure* of presence. It culminates and accumulates presence.<sup>17</sup>

In this sense the supplement comes from the exterior as an extra addition and since it adds itself to a full presence it adds nothing. On the other hand, as Derrida says:

...the supplement supplements. It adds only to replace. It intervenes or insinuates itself *in-the-place-of*; if it fills, it is as if one fills the void. If it represents and makes an image, it is by the anterior default of a presence.<sup>18</sup>

Supplement is vicarious; it is a proxy, a substitute and an adjunct. Its place is assigned in the structure by the mark of a void. The full presence can be full only by allowing a proxy, a mere image to fill in. The two significations of the supplement cannot be separated and they work by supplementing each other. While combing through the texts of Levi-Strauss and Rousseau, Derrida shows how the supplement which recognised as evil, violent, catastrophic and perverted is appropriated into a complementarity. It is by surrendering into the economy of the complement that the supplement wins out. To give an example from the text of Rousseau, supplementarity is the relation between the mama of Rousseau and the person whom she calls the 'Little one' who is none other than Rousseau himself. Derrida quotes Bataille who says "I am myself the Little one, I have only a hidden place". The Little one feels the full strength of his attachments to mama, only when she is invisible. By giving her his love the Little one gives her the hiding place which in fact he himself is, so that she (who signifies the disappearance of the true mother) remains invisible and does not see. The supplement, the Little one is like a thief who *adds* his own invisibility to a room where he enters only to steal without being caught.

Derrida characterises the work of the supplement as diacritical self-reference, re-marking and folding. The diacritical operation may be understood as the operation of quotation marks — or as citationality. Against a certain version of the speech act theory Derrida

<sup>17</sup> Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 144.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p. 145.



has argued that all successful and serious speech acts have as their condition the possibility of being quoted or being performed on stage.<sup>19</sup> We may appreciate Derrida's notion of citationality more clearly if we see it in the light of the theories of quotation developed in the semantic tradition of analytical philosophy. Perhaps we should begin with the devices this tradition deploys to tame citationality. This role is performed by a series of distinctions — use/mention, type/token, sentence/utterance, sentence meaning/speaker meaning etc. For example, one could say that a quoted sentence is not used and only mentioned; what is repeatable in every utterance is only the token of a sentence type and iterability does not have any effect on the purity of the type etc. Derrida's notion of citationality should be seen as escaping the protection of these distinctions.

Perhaps we may be able to throw more light on Derrida's notion of citationality by placing it in the proximity of the demonstrative theory of quotation developed by Donald Davidson.<sup>20</sup> Like Derrida, Davidson too risks the protection of the above distinctions to develop his theory of quotation. He distinguishes his theory of quotation from the available theories of quotation which according to him belong to three types: (1) proper name theory (2) picture theory (3) spelling theory. According to the proper name theory proposed by Tarski a quotation is an expression flanked by quotation marks and it lacks any significant structure and is on par with a proper name. For the picture theory the quotation marks constitute a linguistic environment within which the expressions picture itself. According to the spelling theory a quoted expression is a structured description of a concatenation of the signs of which it is made. We need not go into the details of these theories and need only to know that Davidson's theory is a departure from all of them.

According to Davidson, words within quotation marks, when considered from a semantic point of view, do not form a part of the sentence in which they appear. What appears within quotation marks are not words but inscriptions. They do not refer to anything nor are they the part of anything that refers. However, the quotation mark is a part of the sentence and it does refer. According to Davidson "quotation is a device for pointing to inscriptions (or utterances) and can be used, and often is, for pointing to inscriptions or utterances spatially or temporally outside the quoting sentence." In this the quotation mark is a demonstrative or a "this". This "this" can be supplemented — to our surprise Davidson uses exactly the word "supplemented" — with fingers pointing to a 'token' of that quoted expression and fingers do not belong to language. The structure of pure demonstrative is that of a supplement because it deducts semantic components from sentences and utterances

<sup>19</sup>Derrida, "Signature, Event, Context" in *Margins of Philosophy*, pp. 307-330.

<sup>20</sup>Davidson, "Quotation" in *Inquires in to Truth and Interpretation.*, pp. 77-92.



and also refers to them from outside — like a lizard looking at its own severed tail.

Though this discovery of the demonstrative structure of the quotation mark helps us to understand Derrida's notion of citationality we have to leave Davidson behind because he surrenders his demonstrative theory of quotation to a modified form of Tarskian theory of truth which in turn — and interestingly — presupposes 'disquotationality' of sentences. Derrida, while maintaining that citation has the general structure of a referral without reference frees it from all theories of truth by explicating this structure as a structure of simulation. Here we turn towards Derrida's reading of mime in *Double Session*, where the work of the supplement and simulacra are brought together.

In *Double session* we read Derrida reading Mallarmé reading "the suggestive and truly rare booklet that opens in my hands". What in fact opens up in our hand is complex mirror play of text reflecting each other *ad infinitum*. If we telescope this chain of reflections and feign to assign a last instance or an ultimate signified it could be the performance of a mime. Instead of losing itself in this labyrinth of mirror and its abyss, Derrida tries to formulate this mirror play. Any satisfactory formulation of this structure of referral should tell us two things; what does a mime refer to? How does philosophy refer to mime? Derrida's complex maneuvers with Mallarmé's text is an attempt to answer these questions.

For Derrida the reference of mime cannot be subsumed under any notion of truth — whether truth as adequation or as *aletheia*. In the notion of truth as adequation the imitated and the imitator are set face to face and the good imitation is that which is faithful to the original. When truth is thought as *aletheia* the imitation is a moment in the happening of truth, in the unveiling of the imitated. Here mime imitates nothing; it is the very opening of the origin. The performance of the mime traces out the imitated. A metaphysical closure is erected around the performance of the mime once the reference of the mime is subordinated to these notions of verisimilitude. For Derrida, the mime in the work of a certain syntax, displaces the authority of truth by playing with it. This dislocation is not an event that takes place within the performance of the mime. Miming itself is this dislocating and playing.

The Mime is *acting* from the moment he is ruled by no actual action and aims towards no form of verisimilitude. The act always plays out a difference without reference, or rather without a referent, without any absolute exteriority, and hence, without any inside. The Mime mimes reference. He is not an imitator; he mimes imitation.<sup>21</sup>

The structure of this reference, called variously as quotation, re-mark and fold, not only escapes truth but seems to proliferate imitations by imitating imitation. As we

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<sup>21</sup>Derrida, *Dissemination*, p. 219.



know the symbolic conception of polysemic play too resort to a structure which enables the proliferation of commentaries and the surplus production of meaning. Does Derrida's conception of imitation as the imitation of the imitation or the copy of the copy also leads to such proliferation? Is Derrida's reading practice too, like the interpretative practices of the human sciences, yet another way of multiplying commentaries and discourses?

The plenitude of imitation is a consequence of its diacritical reference and cannot be classified in the categories of richness, intentionality or a horizon. Derrida describes this plenitude;

The sum is impossible to totalise but is not exceeded by the infinite richness of a content of meaning or intention; the perspectiver extends out of sight but without entailing the depth of a horizon of meaning before or within which we can never finish advancing.

This richness is produced not in the depth of meaning but in what Derrida calls the lateral dimension of language. The law of this lateral plenitude would define the limit not through circle of meaning but through the angle or the fold of the ever referring and deferring chain of the supplement. Its inexhaustibility cannot be understood in terms of an ontology of finitude which sustains the human sciences.

If polysemy is infinite, if it cannot be mastered as such, this is thus not because a finite reading or a finite writing remains incapable of exhausting a superabundance of meaning. Not that is, unless one displaces the philosophical concept of finitude and reconstitute it according to the law and structure of the text: according as the blank, like the hymen, re-marks itself forever as disappearance, erasure, non-sense. Finitude then becomes infinitude according to a non-Hegelian identity.<sup>22</sup>

We have already seen this radical finiteness can be conceived as the structural infinite. The production of this infinitude is the work of quotation, re-mark or the fold. Derrida says "....these textual effect are rich with a kind of poverty, I would even call it a very singular and very regular monotony." This poverty is the irreducible excess of the syntax over meaning. The referring structure of the mime, like the demonstrative of quotation, works by exhausting and erasing the semantic resources. As remarked elsewhere this structure is "the supplement of a code which traverses its own field, endlessly displaces its closure, breaks its line, opens its circle, and no ontology will have been able to reduce it."<sup>23</sup>

There can be no ontology of the mime because the generalised reference of the mime as quotation or re-mark casts the Being aside or perpetually suspends it. This reference is

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, p. 253.

<sup>23</sup> Derrida, *White Mythology*, p. 271.



a doubling which impoverishes Being. Hence the mime, the re-mark obliterates “even the opposition of fact and principle, which, in all its metaphysical, ontological, and transcendental forms, has always functioned within the system of *what is*.”<sup>24</sup> In this sense the logic of mime is one of contamination. We have seen that for Derrida the origin of concepts is a forced tropological movement. What is referred to by this forced formation is the contamination of form.

Ontology presumes the possibility of a discourse about the ‘what is’ and decidability about the *on*, the being present. The ontological interpretation of mimesis presupposes the distinguishability between the imitator and the imitated and the anteriority of the latter over the former. However mimesis shatters this confidence of ontology. According to Mallarmé;

The scene illustrates but the idea, not any actual action, ..... here anticipating, there recalling, in the future, in the past, *under the false appearance of a present*. This is how the mime operates, whose act is confined to a perpetual allusion without breaking the ice or the mirror: he thus sets up a medium, a pure medium, of fiction.<sup>25</sup>

Mimesis refers not to an actual action but to an idea, and the Mime mimes in the present but under the false appearance of the present. Here Mallarmé relates mimesis to idea or form and also to the present; “the false appearance of the present” refers to the ‘simul’ which as we have been insisting from the beginning of this study, is the pivot of simulation and simultaneity. The appearance of this pivot — the falsity of the appearance and the appearance of the present — is the performance of the Mime. It is this “simul” that the mime or the quotation marks bring to appearance.

The Idea which the mime imitates is not the figure of the Idea of Platonism nor the subjective representation of post- Cartesianism. It is also not the projection of any philosophical doctrine. If we interpret the imitated Idea as any of these we are still caught in the Platonic mimetologism and its heritage. But as Derrida says “any attempt to reverse mimetologism or to escape it in one fell swoop by leaping out of it *with both feet* would only amount to an inevitable fall back into its system: in suppressing the double or making it dialectical, one is back in the perception of the thing itself, the production of its presence, its truth, as idea, form or matter.”<sup>26</sup> So what Mallarmé or the Mime does to Platonism is a more “subtle and patient, more discrete and efficient” displacement. The Mallarméan Mime is a simulacra of Platonism or Hegelianism.

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<sup>24</sup> Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 75.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Derrida, *Dissemination* p. 175.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, p. 207.



It is a simulacrum of Platonism or Hegelianism, which is separated from what it simulates only by a barely perceptible veil, about which one can just as well say that it already runs — unnoticed between Platonism and itself, between Hegelianism and itself. Between Mallarmé's text and itself.<sup>27</sup>

Between mime and philosophy Derrida discovers an immanent veil; an immanence which is a mask, a false appearance. The mime imitates without piercing this veil. As we have been repeating tirelessly the structure of imitation is the structure of a reference without no simple referent. It refers 'without breaking the ice or the mirror'. It never gets beyond the mirror to the reality. "This speculum reflects no reality; it produces reality effects." This reference moves within the immanence between the Mallarmé's Mime and Plato's Mime. Mallarmé preserves the differential structure of Platonic mime — between the model and the copy but twists free of its Platonic interpretation. Mallarmé achieves this not by developing another philosophical doctrine on imitation. According to Derrida, in Mallarmé's text on the Mime there is no philosophy at all. However, Mallarmé and also the Mime mime or inscribe the Platonic philosophy in such a way that it remains no longer in philosophy. In other words when the Mime mimes the Idea it mimes the entire Philosophy as idea-ology. It quotes or re-marks Platonism.

This miming is the tropological and torsional play which is the origin of philosophical discourse. Play becomes critical or philosophical not when it plays according to a philosophical theme but by playing at it by quoting and re-marking it or by making allusions to it. This play is the production of a generalised structure of reference and allusion of which the immanent veil is made; the texture of this veil is that of allusions and not of illusions (the work of illusion is nothing but allusion). It is through this structure of allusions that critical thinking refers to its objects — natural science, technology or the human sciences.

Miming as allusion is "the manifold play of a scene that, illustrating nothing — neither word nor deed — beyond itself, illustrate nothing. Nothing but the many-faceted multiplicity of a lusture which itself is nothing beyond its own fragmented light."<sup>28</sup> Mallarmé with the "Idea" marks this lusture. This lusture owes its luminosity neither to that effervescence which makes the veil glow — the essence of man, as we saw the last chapter — nor to the Sun of Platonism and its heritage. The lusture is woven with the lines of light; a luminous immanence. In referring to the Idea, the Mallarméan Mime casts its glance at the Platonic sun but without breaking the ice and without coming out of the Cave; without blinding oneself in the Platonic heliographics.

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, p. 207.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, p. 208.



The ideality of the idea is here for Mallarmé the still metaphysical name that is still necessary in order to mark nonbeing, the nonreal, the nonpresent. The mark points, alludes without breaking the glass, to the beyond of beingness.... This "materialism of the idea" is nothing other than the staging, the theater, the visibility of nothing or of the self. It is a dramatisation which *illustrates nothing*, lights up space, re-marks a spacing as a nothing, a blank: white as yet unwritten page, blank as difference between two lines.<sup>29</sup>

The Mime obliterates the temporal anteriority and spatial exteriority of the imitated that sustains the Platonic simulacrum. The Mime is the transgression of this space-time and the transgression a mime. Hence according to Mallarmé the miming takes place in the false appearance of the present. Staging or dramatisation is 'taking place' under the false appearance of the present. This relation between staging and the present bring to focus the pivot of simulation and simultaneity — the simul — to which we have been alluding all through this study. How do we interpret this phrase "under the false appearance of the present"? Perhaps, what appears in the mime is only a false appearance of the present which conceals the true present of that which is mimed — a past-present. It could be that the falsity is that of appearance. Miming is the imitation of an appearance without a concealed reality, without any world behind it and hence without appearance. The appearance of the mime is a mimed appearance and hence a false appearance. It could also be that whatever appears in the mime appears under the mask of the present. Between the model which is in the past and the copy which is in the future allusions and references pass under the mask of a center which is the present.

We can generate all these interpretations by putting quotation marks over appropriate words of this phrase "under the false appearance of the present". These marks mark the movement of a ricochet over the phrase. This is the movement of the mime, the simulacra. This is how the mime refers. The ricochet is the work of syntax — the supplement of a code which traverses its own field — and it displaces without reversing, passes through without piercing, transgresses without disobeying.

We have seen in the last chapter that the Heideggerian critique, to find its way through the immanence that relates it to technology, needed the glow that the effervescent essence of man gives to the immanent veil. Derridian thought frees itself from this dependence and manages to focus itself on the essence of man by lodging itself into the very fibers of light with which the veil is woven.

We have seen how Derrida operationalises the philosophical phantom of the concept of metaphor within a critical practice aimed at circumscribing the condition of the possibility

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, p. 208.



of discourse itself. The concept of play and the Mallarméan Mime are also such phantoms. Here play or simulation refers to a regimen of thinking by which phantasmic and abysmal structures are put to work to strategically displace the oppositions of metaphysics. It is such demonic work that sustains the symbol and gives force to its call to replenish the plenitude of discourse. Beneath the order of this symbol and its economy of exchange Derrida finds the order of mime — an underground economy of the counterfeit which sustains the economy of exchange and also disrupts it. It is this underground of the counterfeit that constitutes the immanent field for the play of critical concepts.

How does such a critique direct itself to the concept of the subject? Derrida warns us against treating his critique as the “liquidation of the subject”.<sup>30</sup> He rejects any single problematic of the subject. It is only a philosophical opinion or doxa that “some thing named subject can be identified and its alleged passing might also be identified in certain identifiable thoughts and discourses”. According to Derrida there has been no ‘The Subject’ for anyone. Even at the heart of transcendental idealism there is an horizon of questioning that is no longer dictated by the egological form of subjectivity or intersubjectivity. In the history of philosophy any attempt to secure self-presence has also recognised and questioned the distance from the self that presence demands. Hence according to Derrida a critical engagement with the concept “subject” should not ignore the critical element it already has and should take aim at the presuppositions of this critique itself. It is in this sense Derrida says that his aim in critiquing the human sciences is not to destroy the subject but to situate it. For him there can only be a differential strategy for the treatment of the subject — to reinterpret it, restore, decenter, displace or to reinscribe it.

Within the syntactical displacement effected by critical thinking, the subject would be “an instance (without stance, a “without” without negativity) for the “who”, a “who” besieged by the problematic of the trace and of difference, of affirmation, of the signature and of the so called “proper” name of the *ject* (above all subject, object, project), as destineering of missive.”<sup>31</sup> The question of the subject belongs to the subject and it is on the subject that this question is asked. But the singularity of the “who” to which the concept “subject” is raised by displacement and decentering is anterior to the question. The question itself is reinscribed into an affirmation. Here the singularity is not the individuality of a self-identical presence. Also the affirmation is not a regression into any precritical naivete. Instead, “Beyond even the force of critique it situates a responsibility as irreducible to and rebellious

<sup>30</sup>Derrida, “‘Eating Well’ or the Calculation of the Subject: An Interview with Jacques Derrida” in *Who Comes After the Subject?*, p. 96.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid*, p. 100.



towards the traditional category of the "subject".<sup>32</sup> The critical subject or the subject of critique is a singularity which is plural and it takes responsibility before asking or facing the question. Derrida says

The singularity of the "who" is not the individuality of a thing that would be identical to itself, it is not an atom. It is a singularity that dislocates or divides itself in gathering itself together to answer to the other, whose call somehow precedes its own identification with itself, for to this call I can only answer, have already answered, even if I think I am answering "no".<sup>33</sup>

Critique cultivates a relationship with the classical subject which is that of responsibility — a relation to self which can only be an alterity or trace. Once this relationship is established Derrida advises us to forget the word "subject" at least to some extent. It is a strategic and active forgetting.<sup>34</sup> Given this strategic play with concepts we may ask what strategic role does the subject play in the critique of the human sciences? Derrida has characterised the subject as an effect. What strategy does he play here?

Why have I rarely spoken of the "subject" or of "subjectivity," but rather, here and there, only of "an effect" of "subjectivity"? Because the discourse on the subject, even if it locates difference, inadequation, the dehiscence within autoaffection, etc., continues to link subjectivity with man.<sup>35</sup>

The subject as the singularity of the "who" accounts for the essence of man. If the critique of the human sciences goes beyond the question of the subject it is not due to the collapse of the subject but because the critique goes beyond the question, opening itself towards an ethics of the critique itself.

## 5.2 Foucault: The Peril and Poverty of Truth

For Foucault the perilous problem of the present is the proliferation of discourses. The question is not about the condition of the possibility of true knowledge but about the poverty of truth; given the fact that 'there is so little truth in truth' what is this plethora of knowledge? According to Foucault philosophy is a way of reflecting not so much on what is true and and what is false, as on our relationship to truth.

Truth is a problem because we relate to ourselves, we transform ourselves by telling the truth. Foucault articulates our present situation as follows :

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, p. 109.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 100-101.

<sup>34</sup> "Not to forget it, it is unforgettable, but to rearrange it, to subject it to the laws of a context that it no longer dominates from the center". (*Ibid*, p. 105.)

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, p. 105.



Indeed truth is no doubt a form of power. And in saying that I am only taking up one of the fundamental problems of Western philosophy when it poses these questions: why, in fact, are we attached to the truth rather than myth? Why the truth rather than illusion? And I think that instead of trying to find out what truth, as opposed to error, is, it might be more interesting to take up the problem posed by Nietzsche: how is it that, in our societies, "the truth" has been given this value, thus placing us absolutely under its thrall?<sup>36</sup>

One the one hand, Foucault believes too much in truth to be fascinated by skepticism or relativism. On the other hand, he rigorously distinguishes his critique from an analytics of truth. This move distances Foucault from epistemology and also from an ontology which claims to dismantle the former. This distancing is essential to name any discourse as a human science. Both epistemology and ontology presuppose a common boundary between philosophy and the human sciences which could be mastered under the authority of truth. Hence, epistemology and ontology cannot but fail to constitute this boundary as such an object of critique. Foucault suspects the involvement of these philosophical projects in the proliferation of discourses that marks the perils of our present. By the name "human sciences" he refers to a specific mode of formation, transformation and correlation of discourses wherein the complicity of epistemology and ontology is put to work. The so called object of the human sciences — man — is in fact the offspring of this relationship between philosophy and some discursive practices. Here Foucault marks his difference from those philosophies — philosophy of life, philosophy of symbol — which have been studying the human sciences at the intersection of the uninterrupted exchanges between epistemology and ontology.

Foucault does not find anything unusual in the turn of the philosophy of the human sciences from epistemology to ontology. This turn only surrenders the critique to what it intends to criticise;

The ontology of annihilation of beings assumes therefore validity as a critique of knowledge: but it is not so much a question of giving the phenomenon a foundation, of expressing both its limit and its law, of relating it to the finitude that renders it possible, as of dissipating it and destroying it in the same way as life itself destroys beings: for its whole being is mere appearance.<sup>37</sup>

It is against this ontologisation of critique that Foucault proposes his critique of the human sciences — archaeology and genealogy. As a philosopher, his interest in the human sciences is prompted by the fact that certain philosophical themes are implicated in the production of these sciences and this involvement impairs thinking. It is only in so far as thinking

<sup>36</sup>Foucault *Politics, Philosophy, Culture*, p. 107.

<sup>37</sup>Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 278.



itself is involved in a crisis that philosophical critique is called for. This does not mean that Foucault simply collapses philosophical concepts into some of their specific historical determinations. Instead, he investigates the relations between some philosophical concepts and certain truth-telling practices of our present. While this investigation cannot afford to collapse philosophical concepts into their specific historic determinations, it refuses to surrender them to the authority of truth. If Foucaultian critique is still an analytic and not an analytics of truth, it is in the sense that it gives the *a priori* conditions for thought's relationship to truth. It seeks to set up conditions for the philosophical analysis of the human sciences.

The traditional philosophy of the human sciences studies discourses in two ways; through formalisation and interpretation. Foucault rejects both of them because they are already in the service of what is to be critiqued. The basic unit of formalisation of discourse is proposition. Interpretation treats discourse as text. According to Foucault, both these attempts, instead of systematising knowledge, only provoke its proliferation. For every proposition we can think of another proposition which takes the former as its object. Thus formalisation multiplies propositions. Interpretation is an invitation to unearth more meaning beneath the manifest content of a text. It leads to the proliferation of commentaries. Both propositions and texts exist in a space of plenitude. They are unable to see the poverty of truth to which they owe their wealth.

Foucault distances himself not only from formalisation and interpretation but also from an institutional analysis which probes the external and internal constraints on discourses. According to Foucault, these constraints are the nodal points for the intensification and proliferation of discourses. The feeling of a lack of knowledge which calls upon us to produce more is provoked by the will to master a more essential rarity and contingency of knowledge. Foucault's critique explores this scarcity whose signature is truth.

Neither the unity of the object nor the unity of the subject, nor the conceptual structure, nor its philosophical loyalties can individuate a discourse. For example, when we speak about psychiatry or economics, despite our familiarity, we may not know the criteria for their individuation. Foucault's aim is to give precise criteria for the formation of discourses, for the threshold of transformation of their rules of formation and also for situating them among other type of discourses and non-discursive practices. The basic unit for the individuation of discourses is neither propositions nor texts but "statements". We shall now examine this ontology of knowledge articulated on the basis of statements. We restrain ourselves from giving a detailed account of the operations of the archaeologist and genealogist and limit



our attention to the ontological status of the rarity of truth and its critical potential. We expect that this critical ontology, without presupposing the relation between what there is and truth, will illuminate the mimetic which plays at truth and escapes ontology.

Foucault does not give any clear definition of a statement; but he offers a cryptic example. A random series of alphabets found in a French typewriting manual — A Z E R T — is a statement. But the alphabets on the keyboard of the typewriter is not a statement.<sup>38</sup> A statement is an enunciative function which relates signs to a field of objects, possible subject positions and domain of co-ordination and repetition. Statements, unlike propositions, contain these variables as their own functions. The identity of a statement is neither determined by the propositional form of the sentence in which it is formulated nor by the context in which it receives meaning. It is constituted by the field of use in which it is placed. Neither the intention of the speaker, the idea expressed, the context nor the object referred to can secure the identity of the statements because all these are internal to the statement-function. Whether different formulations are of the same statement or not is decided by the its “field of stabilization”.

The essential formal character of the statement is its rarity. The analyses of discourse which take either propositions or texts as their unit operate between the poles of plenitude and poverty — a poverty allegedly imposed by totalisation — of discourse. On the one hand, every discourse can say something more than it actually says and hence produces a plethora. On the other hand, this plenitude constantly refers to a single, sovereign origin which springs up through the plurality of things being said. Statements escape this oscillation. They are born rare. A statement is not an actualisation out of many possibilities. They are nothing outside their actual occurrence. About the law of this rarity, Foucault says:

It is based on the principle that *everything* is never said; in relation to what might have been stated in a natural language (*langue*), in relation to the unlimited combination of linguistic elements, statements (however numerous they may be) are always in deficit; on the basis of the grammar and of the wealth of vocabulary available at a given period, there are, in total, relatively few things that are said. We must look therefore for the principle of rarification or at least of non-filling of the field of possible formulations as it is opened up by the language (*langue*). Discursive formation appears both as a principle of division in the entangled mass of discourses and a principle of vacuity in the field of language (*langue*).<sup>39</sup>

What Foucault describes as rarity, vacuity, deficit and non-filling implies an absence more radical than the absence familiar to the ontology of finitude. We think that it is possible

<sup>38</sup> Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 86.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, p. 119.



to work out an affinity or an isomorphism between the concept of "vacuum" in Foucault's critical machinery and the structure of "excess" in Derrida's critique. We shall not attempt to work out this affinity. However, we wish to suggest such a possibility by bringing out the significance of Foucault's notion of rarity in its relation to the problematic of mimesis and the critique of the human sciences.

It is important to know what this rarity is not. It is not a lack within a possible fullness. It does not designate a silence which otherwise could have gained voice. It does not help us to study the obstacles to the production of discourse — institutional, historical, psychological — nor the mechanisms of repression. It only helps us "to define a limited system of presences". Discourse in its birth is "not a rich, difficult germination, it is a distribution of gaps, voids, absences, limits, divisions. The statements that come to be produced do not take the place of some other statement which is absent, silenced or repressed. Statements are always at their own place. Statement "involves no reduplication".

The co-ordinates with which we locate a statement (object, subject position, concepts, associated domains) do not refer to an infinite space but only to a neighbourhood. In this sense the locality of application of a statement is not a small slice of an infinite space. As Deleuze says, whether the space or the group of statements occur first is immaterial. There is no homogeneous space that remains unlocalised, and the space of emergence and the statement merge together under the rule of formation. The rules of a statement have to be found on the same level as the statement itself. This is Foucault's empiricism; statements are multiple, rare and regular.<sup>40</sup> We shall survey this ontology of discourse in some detail.

The object of conventional discourse analysis is the compact richness of what is said: The task of analysis is to master this excess by referring the plurality of what is said to an underlying unity which constantly reproduces the manifest plethora. But the task of Foucault's analysis is to take the enunciative poverty of discourse as its explicit object and to discover its law, and at the same time to account for the possibility of interpretation. For him the value of a statement is less than unity (partial) and unification or totalisation can only multiply it. Hence 'formalisation' of statement does not mean subsumption of many under one; instead of assuming the one as an explanation it seeks to explain the one. The archaeologist 'weighs' the value of the statement. The source of the value of a statement is its essential poverty. The value of statements "is not defined by their truth, that is not gauged by the presence of a secret content; but which characterises their place, their capacity for circulation and exchange, their possibility of transformation, not only in the economy of

<sup>40</sup> As we shall see during our discussion on Deleuze, simulacra too is plural, partial and infinitely repeated or duplicated.



discourse, but more generally in the administration of scarce resources.”<sup>41</sup>

Foucault characterises the statement using the vocabulary of economy. About the statement he says;

[I]t appears as an asset - finite, limited, desirable, useful — that has its own rules of appearance, but also its own conditions of appropriation and operation: an asset that consequently, from the moment of its existence ( and not only in its ‘practical application’), poses the question of power; an asset that is, by nature, the object of a struggle, a political struggle.<sup>42</sup>

Here we find Foucault explicitly posing the question of power and its relation to knowledge — a question usually associated with his “genealogical period”. The question of power is not aimed at the practical application of discourse. The law of appropriation is inscribed within the statements themselves. In this sense in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* the power does not receive an explicit treatment. However, the invocation of power contains the intimations of an outside of knowledge. First of all Foucault distinguishes the power-knowledge nexus from the issues of the practical applications of knowledge. Secondly, in archaeology power is acknowledged as a “question”. Also the power-knowledge relation is conceived around rarity and not around a ‘lack’ of knowledge. All these at least suggest that for Foucault, the rare-form is the form of an opening and he wishes to name this exteriority as power.

Foucault’s interesting comparison of statements to trace gives some clues to the exterior of statements. According to him conventional discourse analysis is caught in an interminable oscillation between the inside and the outside. While interpretation moves from the exterior to the interior, expression moves in the opposite direction — from the interior to the exterior. Foucault finds trace as the pure form of this oscillation. He distinguishes statements from this problematic. Statements refer to an exteriority which is not that of the inside/outside doublets. He cautiously refers to this exteriority as neutrality. Here are his words of caution;

Perhaps we should speak of ‘neutrality’ rather than exteriority; but even this word implies rather too easily a suspension of belief, an effacement or a ‘placing in parenthesis’ of all possible existence, whereas it is a question of rediscovering an outside in which, in their relative rarity, in their incomplete proximity, in their deployed space, enunciative events are distributed.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, p. 120.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, p. 120.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, p. 121.



It is amply clear that this warning is issued against phenomenological bracketing. "Suspension of belief", and "placing in parentheses" could only be referring to phenomenological reduction. The neutral and anonymous enunciatory domain in which the statement appears is not the immanence of a transcendental consciousness. Instead, the immanence in which we find the statement is a rigid reference to an exteriority. The enunciative subject finds a place within this immanence. This notion of an immanence dispersed in a neutral exteriority belongs to a post-phenomenological empiricism. Foucault's criticism of trace and parentheses should be seen in the light of this empiricist objection to phenomenology. In our discussion on Derrida we saw him launching a criticism of phenomenology using the notions of trace structure and quotation marks. Despite the differences in their devices both these thinkers can be seen as articulating a certain irreducible exteriority — an immanence as an unwavering pointer, as an opening. Through these "non-concepts" like trace, statement, and quotation we are trying to study the structure of this opening.

After distinguishing the statement from the historico-transcendental trace Foucault speaks about the remanence proper to the statement. Remanence characterises the mode of existence of statements "independently of their enunciation, in the density of time in which they are preserved, in which they are reactivated, and used, in which they are also — but this was not their original destiny — forgotten, and possibly even destroyed." It is the statement's relation to time. Time of the statement is not the 'obscure time' of thought or the Cogito. According to Foucault conventional discourse analysis presupposes an essential inertia of discourses. An occasional speaker or reader gives them a momentary life. The present of discourse, independent of enunciation, is a total stasis. Remanence is the time of the discourse in its sleep. Foucault highlights the statement's break with phenomenological time by calling remanence a mode of accumulation. This memory makes no reference to any past meaning which was invested in it. It is a memory of the present, of the materiality of its mode of existence. Statements, born poor, have little heritage to retain. *Episteme*, the discursive formation in which statements are individuated, is not a slice of history but a "simultaneous play of specific remanences". This simultaneity is not defined by a totality or homogeneity existing at a given time, but by divergence, distances and difference. It is a *space* of dispersion; a complex relationship of successive displacements. This memory bursts open the time-consciousness of phenomenology.

Though remanence does not refer to past or origin, it refers to antecedents.

Every statement involves a field of antecedent elements in relation to which it is situated, but which it is able to recognise and redistribute according to new relations. It constitutes its own past, defines, in what precedes it, its own filiation,



redefines what makes it possible or necessary, excludes what cannot be compatible with it. and it poses this enunciative past as an acquired truth, as an event that has occurred, as form that can be modified as material to be transformed, or as an object that can be spoken about, etc.<sup>44</sup>

While remanence bursts the self-presence and stasis of the present, repetition reconstitutes the past in every present. The present unrealises itself and actively constructs the reality of the past. This play of remanence and repetition together account for the life of discourse. The production and recovery of meaning is only an effect of this fundamental play. We shall come to this play a little latter. At the moment we shall take stock of the enormous difficulty in granting an ontological status to void or rarity as the form of knowledge and its implications for critical philosophy.

We have seen that rarity is the formal character of statement. A statement is nothing outside its actual occurrence. The rules governing its formation have to be extracted without reference to a possible plenitude which is subsequently constrained. In this sense the *a priori* rules governing it are conditions of actuality and not conditions of possibility. This shift from the conditions of possibility to the conditions of actuality gives a new transcendental principle to the Foucaultian critique. The fact of statement in a discursive formation and the laws that govern it are one and the same; this is the transcendental principle of archaeology. This law determines the formal character of discursive formations. To understand the rare-form, we need to appreciate the change in the transcendental question which seeks this form. We shall try to show that this change in the transcendental form — to the rare-form — is necessary to grant an ontological status to force and also to think the relation between form and force other than as deformation.

Foucault, unlike naive empiricists, does not reduce the possible to the actual. Foucault's aim is to think their difference rigorously. Philosophy, on the one hand insists on this distinction, and on the other, blurs it by seeing the possible as the not-yet actual and the actual as the realised possible. This distinction sustains the idea of form and hence its collapse usually ushers in reductionism. A brief survey of the modal concepts of Kant would help us to bring out their significance for the critical enterprise and also their novel deployment by Foucault.

As we have seen from Descartes to Kant the idea of form undergoes a crucial change. Descartes thinks of form as perfection and Kant as limitation. The former treats form as the finite's infinite perfectibility, whereas for the latter, it is the finite's relation to itself. With Kant the metaphysics of infinity disappears and a rational metaphysics — metaphysics of

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<sup>44</sup>*Ibid*, 124.



totality takes charge. In Kant, the modality of the possible is determined by the formal conditions, the actual by the material conditions. In this way the possible-actual distinction maps on to the form-content distinction.

The fundamental principle of Kantian transcendental philosophy is that the conditions of possible experience and the conditions of the objects of experience are the same. Here the modality of the possible indicates that the experience is not necessarily real but only contingently real. Conditions of the possible experience are the conditions of contingently real contents to be given in experience. The condition of the possibility determines the intrinsic possibility of the contingently real. This intrinsic possibility of the contingently real is called transcendence. Kant conceives transcendence as time.

The concept of possibility is the concept for the consistency with the formal conditions of experience. Actuality is that which is bound up with the material conditions of experience. To say that something is necessary is to subsume the material content under form. This form is not an empty container for material contents. What is given in experience is nothing but the empirical contents. The given is outside of that to which it is given. The possibility of generating this outside is the condition for experience. It is time.

The relation between the possible and the formal needs to be clarified. The possible is not a mere fancy of the mind nor an arbitrary conjunction of thought. Here a paradox is awaiting us. Certain possible entities are not actual. But the only possible entities are the actual ones. The easiest solution to this paradox is to give up the distinction itself, of course by paying the inevitable price of falling into reductionism. Another option is to maintain that the potential entity, with the addition of something extra, would become the actual. That is, the intrinsic possibility or essence attains existence by an external addition. Kant rejects this idea of adding to the possible because that which is to be added to the possible, in addition to the possible would be the impossible. The real contains no more than the merely possible. When a concept actualises, nothing more is added to the world. When we move from possibility to actuality we are only changing the concepts relation to our knowledge. What does this change in modality consist in? Kant rejects a certain habit of conceiving the possible as an "half-baked actual".<sup>45</sup> All our knowledge falls within the bound of possible

<sup>45</sup> We learn this expression from Richard Rorty's brilliant essay on Whitehead. (Rorty, "Matter and Event", in *The Concept of Matter in Modern philosophy*) Clarifying Whitehead's distinction between the potential and the actual he says "A possible entity, for Whitehead is not a half-baked version of an actual entity; to think of it this way is to like thinking of the datum about which one decides as itself a half-baked decision" (*Ibid* p. 233). Given the radical empiricism they share, a comparative study between Foucault and Whitehead would be interesting. The sentence quoted above has something to enlighten us on critical thinking and on the possibility of a critical ontology. Once we understand critical thinking by its decisiveness then we realise the importance the distinction Rorty is making between the decision and the datum about which we make the decision. The distinction between the possible and the actual leads us to an ontology of selective being.



experience. This relation to possible experience ensures the objective reality of a concept without actually experiencing it. Objective reality of a concept can be known independently of actual experience but not independent of the form of experience in general. The possible as the form of experience does not mean that it is a separate container to be filled in by real content. The form is not over and above the content or vice-versa. Also, absence of logical contradiction alone does not guarantee the possibility of a concept. The modal concept of the possible is expected to save us from granting objective reality to fanciful concepts and arbitrary combination of thought. I can represent to myself something from which something else follows logically, but this is no way of judging whether this property is to be met by any of the possible things. Only that which complies with empirical laws is possible. Nothing more can be known or needs to be known outside the domain of the possible.

For Kant void does not belong to the domain of the possible experience. In other words the domain of the possible experience is compact. A substance which is permanently present in space without filling it, is conceivable without logical contradiction but this does not give it any objective reality. To Kant, the occupancy of space by matter is not a logical necessity as Descartes would have us believe. From the logical necessity of a thought we cannot derive the objective reality of a thing. Kant refuses to identify matter with extension. Matter does not fill space because of its bulkiness. For him matter is determinable. It is formability itself. It is no unformed bulkiness. If this is so, to give an account of how matter fills the space it occupies, Kant proposes an explanation in terms of force. Matter occupies space, not through its bare existence, but through a specific moving force. Nature abhors vacuum not because space has a force to draw matter into it. Space is not a force, but a form. And it is matter that is a force. Kant characterises matter by its impenetrability. Two things cannot occupy the same slice of space not because of any logical contradiction excludes the intruding material but because matter occupies space with some force or intensity. For something to assume a space means it has the force to exclude others.

The impossibility of void is explained only by the modality of necessity. Only if the concept of necessity is added to causality that the field of possible experience contains no void. What is added by this modality is force. To say that something is necessary is to subsume the material content under form. Subsumption is an act of force.

As we have seen, void is inadmissible in the Kantian ontology under the modality of the possible. Also, this compact ontology presupposes force. Foucault realises that void can become a formal character of the statement or become a form only when it is thought

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Here we see the profound connection between Whitehead and Nietzsche.



under the conditions of existence. As Kant has shown, existence is not a predicate but the power to existence. Thus both the void and force become amenable for an inquiry regarding their form.

According to Foucault, the form of a statement is not a law but a regularity. Regularity is opposed to normativity (rule-boundness) and originality. Rules, which belong to the same level as that of the ruled, make up regularity. Also, though very few statements can be formulated at a time, their emergence is not extra-ordinary but regular. It hardly matters whether a statement is repeated for the first time or not. This anoriginality of statement implies its repeatability.

An empiricist will object to repeatability because for him repetition implies necessity and forms. For a rationalist regularity is unacceptable because it lacks the force of necessary laws. Foucault, like Kant, finds a way between them. Rules or laws do not restrain repetition, instead, presuppose it.

Repetition and regularity are not opposed to rarity but implied by it. To repeat a statement, all its co-ordinate series, space of emergence, and the non-discursive space associated with it, are to be repeated. This gives a non-trivial sense to the repetition. — unlike that of a proposition. For Foucault, only at the level of statements that repetition becomes significant. Repetition makes a difference only to that which is rare. The archaeological principle that a statement can be individuated and identified only against a regularity means that a statement is already always repeated. Identity of statement presupposes repetition — a repetition of something almost identical to it but separated by a crucial difference.

Foucault provides the best account of this rarity and repetition in his work on Roussel.<sup>46</sup> In this book Foucault credits Roussel with the formulation of the constitutive law of our language, a rarity of words — not of meaning — which allows us to speak and perceive things.

According to Foucault, language offers us with two possibilities — use the same words to say different things or use different words to say the same things. The former presupposes an initial poverty of words, while the latter, an initial plenitude. Roussel lodges himself between these possibilities to form an “inextricable circle which returns words to their point of origin by force of his constraining rules”.<sup>47</sup> He extrapolates that movement of words by which they can slip away from their proper use, allowing words to say different things including lies. Roussel repeats the same sentence (with a small difference) to say different things; this is a familiar trope — catachresis. This catachrestic discourse reveals what the

<sup>46</sup> Foucault, *Death and the Labyrinth*.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, p. 16.



words conceal — a colourless domain within language and “in the very interior of the words its own insidious void, barren and confined”. It is this constitutive void that discourse tries to mask. The concealment of this void subjects discourse to signification. Discourse begins to speak by effacing its materiality. Foucault finds Roussel displaying masking as an anti-style to free the essential materiality of language.

The topological space where this process is situated would then be analogous to the idea of a mask. The hollowness that opens within a word would not simply be the property of verbal signs, but a more basic ambiguity, perhaps even more dangerous. It would show that a word, like a gaudy cardboard face, hides what it duplicates and is separated from it only by the slightest layer of darkness. The double meaning of words would be like the repetition by the mask on top of the face. it reveals the same eclipse of being.<sup>48</sup>

Language begins in this vacuity of being as a murmur. For Foucault, there is a bare fact about language — language speaks only from something essentially lacking. This void “is the insolvency of words which are fewer in number than the things they designate and due to this principle of economy, must take on meaning. Because of this lack, words do not duplicate nor subordinate things but lead them to their luminous being”.

For Roussel, the basic unity of narrative is a ‘metagram’ — a word or sentence repeated almost identically but with a minute difference. The metagram is lodged between two enigmatic repetitions; a natural moment of repetition beneath the language and the impossibility of language to repeat itself exactly. By repeating each of these repetitions in the other, the metagram introduces a slip between language and meaning.

These two possibilities reinforce each other as open questions; there’s an area of doubt where words and their meanings change in an ambiguous relationship to each other, transferred by a slow rotation which prevents the return of meaning from coinciding with the return of language.<sup>49</sup>

This constitutive slowness or slip prevents language from exactly imitating the objects. Roussel, through a calculated repetition of words, imitates this slow rotation of language. His metagram imitates the impossible imitation of language. It inhabits and imitates the constitutive flow of this structure of imitation. Foucault describes the effect of this performance;

The result is even more effective because the sentence being repeated no longer refers to things themselves but to their reproductions: sketch, cryptogram,

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<sup>48</sup>Foucault, *Ibid* p. 18.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid*, p. 21.



enigma, disguise, theatrical performance, a spectacle seen through glasses, symbolic image. The verbal doubling is carried on at the level of repetition. This exact repetition, this faithful double, this repetition of language has the function of pointing out all the flows, of highlighting all the impediments to its being the exact representation of what it tries to duplicate, or else of filling the void with the enigma that fails to solve.<sup>50</sup>

Roussel, by the doubling and repetition of sentences, 'points out' the constitutive flow of language. Foucault describes the performance of Roussel as an attempt to formulate the 'profound void' underlying objects and words. Foucault, the thinker, finds that the novelist has already thought ahead of thinkers and formulated the void which has always eluded philosophy. Roussel formulates this void through imitation. Void is that form which can be formulated only through imitation. For Roussel, the flow of language is at once the symptom and the disease and its only cure is an exact imitation of that very flow. By administering the poison as the cure, Roussel empowers language to take hold of its own evil, imperfections and its constitutive void. Like a caricature, which through exaggerated and distorted imitation brings to light the constitutive imperfection of the imitated and the exact distance that separates the ideal and the actual, Roussel's imitation points out the distance between the mask and the face.

The metagram is both the truth and the mask, a duplicate, repeated and placed on the surface. At the same time, it is the opening through which it enters, experiences the doubling, and separates the mask from the face that it is duplicating.<sup>51</sup>

Roussel, through a masked imitation sneaks into that finite distance that separates the mask from the face. Within this gap the structure of imitation of language becomes the "spontaneous life of people and things." Only a thinking that enters this gap and inhabits its structure of imitation can think the ontology of the void and perform the critical role of unmasking.

Foucault's account of Roussel brings about a paradigm shift in conceiving self-reflection; mask replaces mirror as the model for reflection and repetition. Mimesis is no longer a play of mirrors but a play of masks.

During our discussion on Heidegger we saw the crucial positioning of the mirror between thinking and mimesis. Bewildered by the quickness and cunning of mimesis, thinking, from Plato to Heidegger, makes use of the wonderwork of mirror. Mirror, in an attempt to outwit mimesis, through doubling and repetition, drives thinking to dizzying speeds. However, mimesis, which is a "slow rotation" between the model and the imitation, slips out of

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, p. 22-23.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, p. 25.



the frenzy of mirror-work. This is the fate of any attempt to capture mimesis in the mirror. Foucault's Roussel succeeds in formulating the ontology of mimesis because he works with a new device — the mask.

The void and the mask refer to a form which can be formulated only by a mimetic thinking. The archival thinking of Foucault formulates this rare-form. In thinking this rare-form, Foucault inhabits a structure, which enables him to slip out of the form of man which masks the void between words and objects, and also to delve into that void. A critique of discourse of the the human sciences is possible only when thinking discovers such a structure for the transgression of the critiqued totality. Thinking sneaks out of the conditioned by its own essential rarity. Once thinking launches itself on such a structure of flight beyond the conditioned, it can turn back and reconstitute the hidden form of the conditioned totality, exposing the latter's fragility and "making visible a singularity at places where there is a tendency to invoke a historical constant, an immediate anthropological trait, or an obviousness which imposes itself universally on all."

Foucault escapes the knowledge-form of the the human sciences and reconstitutes the fact of these sciences as an event, as a singularity. His analytical procedure for "eventalisation" is to invent the analytical salients of the object of study and give them intelligibility by arranging them in a polygon or a polyhedron. What grants intelligibility to these polyhedrons is not the modality of necessity but actuality. The number of faces of the polyhedron is never given in advance and one never finish constructing them. This analytical procedure instead of giving into the naivete of the ultimate simple or to the fiction of the whole discovers the plurality and polymorphism of the simple. (We shall consider the synthesis of the polymorphic simple while we discuss Deleuze in the next section.) Foucault's polyhedral analysis of events presupposes the polymorphism of the faces composing the polyhedron. Without this the epistemic polyhedron would collapse into an arcane epistemological schema.

In *The Order of Things* Foucault reconstructs the event of knowledge called the human sciences as a trihedron. On one dimension of this volume we find mathematical and physical sciences which are deductive systems linking evident or verified propositions. The second dimension is occupied by sciences of life, labor and language, establishing structural constants and casual relations between discontinuous and analogous elements. On the third dimension we find philosophical reflection. The first two dimensions define a common plane as the field of application of mathematics to the sciences of life, labour and language. The third dimension forms a common plane with the second where epistemological and ontological enquires on the human sciences appear. The first and the last dimensions together define a



plane where formalisation of thought takes place.

The human sciences are situated in the volume enclosed by these three planes. This spatial distribution, though places human sciences in relation to all forms of knowledge, also renders this whole configuration unstable and precarious. With their spatial location in the discursive formation they pose a permanent threat to deductive sciences, sciences of life, labor and language and philosophy. The slightest deviation from their 'proper' planes can send them tumbling over into the space occupied by human sciences. Hence the unceasing warnings we hear against the perils of psychologism, sociologism, anthropologism etc.

Man is the knowledge-form trapped in this epistemological trihedron. Foucault provides many negative characterisations indicting this spatial configuration. He finds this space unstable, precarious and perilous. He characterises the figure of man as an endless oscillation between the doubles of the transcendental and empirical, thought and unthought and the retreat and return of the origin.<sup>52</sup> He finds the project of human sciences ultimately 'unworkable' and the discourses of human sciences 'monotonous' and 'hackneyed'. Despite their casual appearance these remarks are not mere opinions or impressions. They are rigorous descriptions of the event of knowledge.

The archaeological investigation allows Foucault to escape from the traditional epistemological debates regarding the methodology of human sciences. In these debates the human sciences are characterised by their specific object — man. Their inferior status as compared to the natural sciences is accounted for by the complexity of the object they study. The density of man makes the formalisation of human sciences slow. Some treat the human sciences as a different kind of sciences having an irreducible interpretative content which defies formalisation. This is the familiar terrain for an unending controversy on explanation and understanding. Foucault leaves this terrain altogether. According to him, the inferiority of human sciences is not due to the nature of their object but due to the peculiar position they occupy in the epistemological configuration.

Foucault discovers that human sciences work by stealing certain forms of knowledge from the empirical sciences of life, labor and language and by duplicating them within an enclosed space. The human sciences occupy the distance that separates biology, economics and philology from the analytics of finitude. (which gives them their possibility in the very being of man.) They deflect the empirical sciences towards man's subjectivity. "They lead the sciences of life, labor and language back to that analytic of finitude which shows how man in its being, can be concerned with the things he knows, and know the things that, in

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<sup>52</sup> Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 318-336.



positivity, determine his mode of being".<sup>53</sup> What the analytic of finitude requires of man in the interiority, human sciences develop in the exteriority of knowledge. Thus philosophy and the human sciences in their mutual complicity duplicate life, labor and language in the interior as well as exterior of man. The relation between human sciences and natural sciences are not one of degree of exactitude or rigor but of duplication. The human sciences duplicate not only other sciences but themselves too — as sociology of sociology etc. Usually we say the human sciences imitate natural sciences. But Foucault is perhaps the first one to ask what is the modality of imitation and duplication proper to knowledge. Usually the imitative relation between natural and the human sciences is studied in terms of mathematisation of 'qualitative sciences', transportation of metaphors across the boundaries of sciences etc. According to Foucault all these are insignificant commerce compared to the epistemic plunder and fraud that sustains the human sciences.

It appears that Foucault's critique of the human sciences is a critique of duplication and fraud. This critique of epistemic-duplication — fraud under the aegis of truth — looks like a hyper-platonism. We are familiar with Plato's criticism of imitation; imitation wears out, impoverishes, corrupts Being. It would seem Foucault too is advancing a similar critique against the the human sciences for corrupting or impoverishing the mathematical sciences, the pure discourses of life, language and labor and also the purity of philosophical reflection by duplicating them. If it were the case archaeology would be nothing more than a piece of Platonism. But this suspicion arises from a lack of attention to the mode of duplication proper to statements which we have already discussed. Discourse is born in an essential rarity. They have nothing to loose except this heritage of poverty. The structure of this poverty keeps them open to duplication. The human sciences dupe this constitutive vice — of discourse to proliferate empty platitudes on man. If we dig beneath this empty plenitude and platitudes we may not discover a violated innocence but the essential evil or vice which only the poor possesses. The task of Foucault was never to unearth repressed meanings, hidden forms or to liberate suppressed voices and muffled speeches but to open the gate for an infamy which has so far been duped under the dignity of truth.

In the above sense the duplication that sustains the polyhedron of the human sciences does not work by corrupting the purity of those discourses which occupy the faces. The faces themselves are born in the structure of a repetition. Within the polyhedron two duplications come face to face. It is the struggle between two repetitions or duplications that render the schema of the human sciences precarious.<sup>54</sup> Thought dares to come in contact with

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, p. 354.

<sup>54</sup> What would happen if two simulators who simulate each other come face to face? Like the Deleuzian



the precarious only to the extent that it has already thought the structure of the precarious, discontinuous and dispersed existence. It is through this structure that thought escapes perilous formations. This escape route of thinking is named variously as discontinuity, mutation, rupture etc.

Foucault's archaeological studies are often seen as descriptions of discontinuous upheavals in knowledge formations. He uses discontinuities, mutations and ruptures with a critical force. For example, Foucault's critique of man and his sciences bears upon the fact that man is a recent invention and the hope that he will soon be effaced from the scene of knowledge. What critical force does this repeated affirmations of discontinuities have? Foucault warns us against reading him as a philosopher of discontinuity.<sup>55</sup> Foucault's aim is to pose the question of discontinuity in a decisive way and to find out the transformations needed to move from one discursive formation to the another. For him, discontinuity is a problem to be resolved. It is through the ruptures of knowledge that we get a glimpse of its outside. Archaeology, according to Foucault "deprives us of our continuities ... it breaks the thread of transcendental teleologies; and where anthropological thought once questioned man's being or subjectivity, it now bursts open the other, and the outside .... it establishes that we are difference, that our reason is the difference of discourses, our history the difference of times, ourselves the difference of masks".<sup>56</sup>

Reason as the difference or fractures of discourses, ourselves as the difference of masks; here we get a glimpse of that exteriority which is beyond man and his sciences. In *The Order of Things* between every two discursive formations Foucault's thought takes a leap into this exterior. While describing the transformation of knowledge from the classical age to the modern, Foucault asks:

How is it that *thought detaches itself from the squares it inhabited before* - general grammar, natural history, wealth - and allows what less than twenty years before had been posited and affirmed in the luminous space of understanding to topple down into error, into the realm of fantasy, into non-knowledge? What event, what law do they obey, these *mutations that suddenly decide* that things are no longer perceived, described, expressed, characterised, classified and known in the same way, and that it is no longer wealth, living beings and discourse that are presented to knowledge in the interstices of words or through their transparency, but beings radically different from them?<sup>57</sup>

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astrologers who meet each other, these dupes too might break into a laughter which would ultimately blow off their heads! It is the same laughter that awakened Foucault from the anthropological slumber; the laughter of Zarathustra which blows off the present.

<sup>55</sup> Foucault 'The Art of Telling Truth' in *Politics, Philosophy, Culture*, p. 99.

<sup>56</sup> Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 131.

<sup>57</sup> Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 217 (Italics mine).



Mutations of forms are described as decisions concerning beings — a decision which is effectuated through the cession of forms. Thinking is this splitting and rupturing of knowledge, opening up lines of flight to newer forms. What is named, in archaeological terms, as the exterior of form, receives the name 'power' in the genealogy.

Foucault's analysis of power whose pathos — despite the lyricism of affirmation — reminds us of Kantian Transcendental Aesthetics is well known. We shall not attempt to compile them once again. Instead we shall only point out how Foucault's notion of power as outside escapes the ruse of the symbol which occupies the interstices of forms, neutralising their polymorphism and paralysing their repetition outside of man-form. The symbol guards the boundary of the discursive formation of the human sciences, folding every attempt of transgression into the inside. It hampers the mimetic play of forms in throwing their polymorphic existence into the powers of novel mutations comes from outside.

Foucault's asymbolic conception of power enables him to distance himself from any attempt to think the relation between power and knowledge in terms of ideology. This is not because of any relativistic doubts regarding the possibility of a critique of ideology. As Foucault shows in *The Order of Things*, the concept of ideology belongs to the same discursive formation as that of human sciences. Questioning of human sciences at the level of ideology will be nothing more than an internal squabble. As ideology critique, even materialist critique falls to the seduction of consciousness, even if it is a false one. Only under a symbolic conception of discourse that human sciences can be seen as ideological. According to this view power and knowledge are integrated through legitimation — in institutionalised practices of symbolic mediation. What is critiqued is the redundant power which is symbolically invested. In contrast to this, for Foucault, power relations are integrated by knowledge, producing truth as a problem.<sup>58</sup>

This asymbolic nature of power is depicted in Foucault's masterly description of the "Spectacle of the Scaffold" in *Discipline and Punish*. In the spectacle of torture, power is invested directly on the body without symbolic mediation. The opposition that structures the spectacle is that between the majestic body of the king and the tortured body of the condemned man.

According to the symbolic notion of power, it is the already divided body of the king that binds the society into a unity and produces power. The unity of the society is secured by an internal articulation which presupposes an internal division. It is by dividing

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<sup>58</sup>On ideology, Foucault says "The first is that, whether one wants it to be or not, it is always in virtual opposition to something like truth. Now I believe that the problem is not to make the division between that which, in a discourse, falls under scientificity and truth and that which falls under something else but to see historically how truth-effects are produced inside discourses which are not in themselves either true or false."



itself and representing this division to itself that the symbol produces and contains power. The source of power is society's non-identity with itself.

Foucault replaces this symbolics of power with a micro-physics of power. Power is invested on bodies even before it is possessed by a doubled and symbolically constituted identity. Power doubles the body.

If the surplus power possessed by the king give rise to the duplication of his body, has not the surplus power exercised on the subjected body of the condemned man give rise to another type of duplication.<sup>59</sup>

Power splits the body of the king into that of divine law and of the individual. Correspondingly the body of the condemned man is also doubled, producing a soul — a soul not born out of sin and then subjected to punishment but a soul born out of punishment. The soul is the “element in which are articulated the effects of a certain type of power and the reference of a certain type of knowledge, the machinery by which power relations give rise to possible corpus of knowledge and knowledge extends and reinforces the effects of this power.”<sup>60</sup> Power is constitutive of the symbol and the soul. With this discovery Foucault rips apart the dialectic of power, desire and meaning.<sup>61</sup> Power takes hold of knowledge in the doubling of the body.

The analysis of power-knowledge relations as constitutive of the soul, replaces the habit of looking at knowledge as the activity of the knowing subject. It is not the activity of the knowing subject that produces knowledge but “the power-knowledge, the processes and struggles that traverse it and of which it is made up, that determines the forms and possible domains of knowledge.” The power-knowledge directly acts on the body, producing the soul as an effect. This is the political-technology of the body.<sup>62</sup> The analysis of power, knowledge and body does away with two prominent conceptions of power — power as violence and as ideological. There is a familiar philosophical strategy to remove violence from the exercise of power - to make the force subservient to form. Knowledge as form excludes and subsumes force. If power impinges on unformed matter, violence results. In Kant the relation of forces is conceived as a relation of forms - the form of the “I think” and the forms of intuition (space-time). Hence self-determination is an exercise of uncoerced force. Within this conception, renunciation of force in favor of form is the condition of knowledge.

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, p. 29.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, p. 29.

<sup>61</sup> We shall discuss the relation between the dialectics of power, desire and meaning and the problematics of mimesis in the section on Deleuze.

<sup>62</sup> “But the body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it train it, torture it, force it to carry out our tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs.” (*Ibid*, p. 25.)



For Foucault the exercise of power is not by its nature violence because power does not immediately impinge on the body. Power acts only on actions. The other in a power relationship must be recognised as a subject who acts. Power is a way of acting upon acting subjects by virtue of their actions or being capable of action. In other words power takes hold of the body only within a system of subjection — its acting on itself. The soul is an effect of this subjection. Due to this subjection — self-relation of the body — the investment of power need not be inherently violent. The status of the soul as a correlative of a certain technology of power makes, the exercise of power too physical to be ideological. The direct investment of power on body does not call for any naive naturalism. Power takes hold of the body only in so far it is a subjected body. Subjection is the bending of forces. Forces are bent through the refractory material of knowledge forms. Power acts through knowledge producing truth. It is by problematising truth that power provokes questions and answers - that is communication. Power is unformed, diffused and mobile. Only knowledge can fix these mobile forces into stable forms. Force is not that which is outside of knowledge. It is that outside itself as a place of mutation. From the stand point of the body, it is that dimension of space through which body offers itself for subjection. The nature of power as mutation of forms through direct investments on body is the discovery of genealogist. The genealogist gives content to the notion of change by interpreting the mutual capture of power and knowledge as the selection, preservation and transmission of particular features of body. He discovers an active and selective remanence of the body preserved in its fold as a relation to the exterior. This is the mimetic conception of thinking as a critical ontology. This mimetics of the body, power and form is elaborated in "Nietzsche Genealogy and History"<sup>63</sup>

By way of interpreting Nietzsche, Foucault prepares the groundwork for a critical analysis of the relation between objective capacities of the body, forms of knowledge, meaning or communication, and relations of power. What Foucault calls discipline is a putting into operation these three aspects, adjusted to one another according to a considered formula. The task of critique is to locate the place of human sciences in this relationship.

As genealogy, thought turns back upon itself and captures it at its moment of origin. However, the philosophy of origin is complicit in the oscillations and doubling which are characteristic of the human sciences. So genealogy makes a distinction between origin and descent and pursues the latter. The philosophy of origin has already dreamt about an origin where the truth of things corresponded to a truthful discourse — "the site of a fleeting articulation that discourse has obscured and finally lost" Complimentary to this idealisation,

<sup>63</sup>Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy , History", in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, p. 139-164.



the past is also treated as infantile and full of errors.

Genealogy, on the other hand, discovers a lowly beginning for everything. At the beginning of things it finds not the identity of an origin but the dissension of other things. Genealogy documents the invasions, struggles, plunderings, disguises and ploys at the origin of everything. For the genealogist the origin of things conceals only one secret — “the secret that they have no essence or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms.”<sup>64</sup> History which is complicit in this concealment is paradigmatic of the human sciences. It chronicles the evolution of forms. If history is the search for the origin, genealogy is the search for the origin of history itself. However, Foucault has shown in *The Order of Things*, that the reflexive effort to locate the origin of history in history itself is constitutive of the discourse of history. How does genealogy escapes this retreat and return of the origin?

Genealogy shifts the scene of history from consciousness to the body. The search for origin is replaced by the search for decent and blood relations. Genealogy proceed as a ‘pharmacology’ and critique, the diagnosis and cure of bodily ailment.

The genealogist needs history to dispel the chimera’s of origins, somewhat in the manner of the pious philosopher who needs a doctor to exorcise the shadow of his soul.<sup>65</sup>

Genealogy discovers the life of the body as the condition of history. History is, at once, the malady and its own anti-dote. History is the poison and the cure . The logic of this strange cure fosters a new relationship between body and history through the practice of active forgetting. Subjectivisation as active forgetting and as doubling is the anti-dote prescribed by genealogy for its own history.

The concept of decent undercuts the idea of a symbolically mediated tradition. “genealogy identifies events not by their ”exclusive generic characteristics of an individual, a sentiment or an idea” but by subtile, singular and subindividual marks.”<sup>66</sup> These traits relate to the events they identify externally. Foucault finds a three -fold relationship between events and traits.

An examination of decent also permits the discovery of the unique aspect of a trait or a concept, of the myriad events *through which - thanks to which, against which - they are formed.*<sup>67</sup>

‘Trough which’, ‘thanks to which’, ‘against which’ — this is the cryptic characterisation of the relationship between concepts and events. Foucault elaborates this further; “Concepts do

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, p. 142.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 144-145.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, p. 145.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, p. 146 (Italics mine.)



not lie at the roots of things. They are related to things externally as surfaces for the scattered dispersion of events. Genealogy does not trace the unbroken continuity between past and present uninterrupted by concepts and forgotten things. Instead it charts the descent by maintaining the passing events in their proper dispersion." Genealogy studies the proper dispersion of events not in terms of the internal relationship with concepts — truth — but in terms of the "external accidents, errors, reversals and faulty calculations." Genealogical body is this surface of dispersion. "The body is the inscribed surface of events." Inscription is a contest. Body is not a passive surface which caves in under the pressure of the inscribing device; nor, its resistance a response to the spontaneity of inscription. Inscription from the very beginning is an encounter, engagement, disintegration. Body is a volume in perpetual disintegration — an inscription before falling into signification is a wound. Is the body a substantive unity anterior to inscription — the locus of primal significations? No. The unity of the body is an illusion created in and through the very act of inscription. The writing machine, stitches the body together into a unity with a thread of wounds. Genealogy exposes these blood stained patch-works on the fringes of stable historical forms.

So far philosophy has always thought of consciousness as pure and absolutely malleable surface. Knowledge is seen as faithful inscription on a *tabula rasa*. Nietzsche is not simply inverting this writing machine by unfolding the interiority of the soul onto the exteriority of the body; the soul itself is an event in the exterior dispersion of the body. We can relate this writing machine to Foucault's typographical example given in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* for the statement. The letters on the typewriter keyboard is not a statement, but if they appear on a manual they form a statement. What connects the letters on the board with inscriptions on the paper is the force exerted by the fingers. The form of the statement intergrates these forces.<sup>68</sup>

Epistemology has always regarded knowledge as the inscription of forms. Every inscription is also an imitation. Inscription on the *tabula rasa* produces knowledge because, that inscription is an interaction between forms — the form of determination and the form of the determinable matter. The matter on which forms are imposed exhibit contradictory characteristics. It is malleable to the extent matter seeks form. It resists the imposition of form, to the extent it possesses the incorrect form. Both the cuddleness and stubbornness of matter is analysed into congeries of forms denying ontological status to "unformedness". By discovering "forms of dispersion" genealogy grants ontological status to unformedness as power.

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<sup>68</sup> Deleuze, *Foucault*, p. 12.



To this ontology of the force and form Foucault adds the ontology of the body. The 'subjectification' or the bending of forces at the level of the body saves stabilisation of forces by forms from violence. This is the third dimension of thinking. If power is unformed matter, body is the forming agent. Traditional epistemology sees the inscription of forms as the effacement of the materiality of the body. Nietzsche questions this dream about a passive surface which arches and cuddles under the tickling of writing machines. Genealogy articulates the cries and resistance of the body. It does not pretend to do justice to its object by effacing itself in front of the object. Genealogy "refuses to be given to discrete effacement before the object it observes and does not submit itself to their process; nor does it seek laws, since it gives equal weight to its own sight and to its objects."<sup>69</sup>

The genealogist works with a hammer, like a sculptor. Nietzsche calls historians eunuchs because they invent time to efface their bodies. Historians are street vendors of empty identities- they cloth every event in history with an armour from the past. Genealogist unmasks this masquerade. To unmask is not to succumb to the temptation to seek a hidden truth behind the mask but to push to the limit and prepare "the great carnival of time where masks are constantly reappearing."

Time as a masquerade — staged spectacle — is a favorite theme of genealogy. What is history if it is not the masquerading of space as time? Here Foucault's Nietzsche is on the threshold of posing the guiding question of the critique — How does the present pass? The present can pass — but on the stage, wearing masks. History as mimesis — this is the discovery of the genealogist.

Nietzsche extracts the supra-historical sense — the anti-dote — from history itself by turning history against its own birth. This seizure is a mimetic capture. The genealogy stages history as an event. The emergence of the event is not the unavoidable conclusion of a long preparation, but a scene where forces are risked, where they emerge triumphant, where they can also be confiscated. Genealogy aims for the mimetic mastery of history.

By staging events genealogy magnetizes them with forces. The spatiality of the stage is constituted by the asymmetry of forces. To put something on the stage is to throw it open to chance, to unknown forces and valorisations.

The Nietzschean mimesis is far removed from the Aristotelian mimesis. In the Greek tragedy the reversal of forces of destiny leads to the recognition of finitude of the hero. The moment of error and the consequent reversal of fortune which produces discordance in life, when staged, produces extreme coherence and concordance. Here the discordance of forces

<sup>69</sup>Foucault, *Language, Counter Memory, Practice*, p. 157.



is sublimated into the concordance of meaning. For hermeneutic understanding staging is a passage from the perplexity of life to the lucidity of meaning. By keeping the life of the hero on the stage, through the synthetic activity of plot-composition we are able to experience certain hidden dimensions of time which will bring an order to the mere succession of chance events. The structure of explication, production of sense and recognition of identities make the Greek stage possible.

Genealogy on the other hand is a poetics of force. Here reversal presupposes an asymmetry of forces which constitute the stage. The tragic hero masks himself so successfully that even the Gods are fooled into punishing him for a chance error; a momentary indifference of the hero drives the law mad. As Foucault says "Taking up these masks, revitalising the buffoonery of history, we adopt an identity whose unreality surpasses that of god who started the charade"<sup>70</sup>. This is mimesis at its limits. It kills God by imitating him. It also unrealises the imitator, through the "excessive choice of identities and masks."

The mask is a weapon of critique. The genealogist constructs the present as a event by dramatising it. Thinking as dramatisation presupposes a stage — the doubling and folding of the present through an exteriority. At every point in space there are bifurcating paths some of which suddenly lead us to the stage. Thinking, by rupturing forms infinitely, opens up such staircases from every point in space. Thus it discloses the antecedents of everything in the present and tells us that their apparent necessities have a recent origin and they could have been different. Thus it makes a difference between our apparent present and our actuality. The actual is the actively unrealised present; the staged present. As genealogy, thinking prepares itself to play the game of masks with the masquerade of time.

Foucault's critique of the human sciences relieves thinking from the inertia of man and the insomnia of critique. He does not disturb the sleep of documents in the dusty shelves of libraries. Instead, he follows them in their sleep and listen to their mute speech. Man is not only our present form but has always been the form of the present. Foucault bursts the myth of the passage of the present which the masquerade of time has smuggled into philosophy under the guise of a profound enigma. The threat of the stasis of the present is nothing more than a deceitful promise about a different future. In order that we may not invest in the actuality of our present, we are led into believing that we are debtors to a past and recipients of the gifts of future. Fascination with the passage of time is part of the metaphysical heritage critique has not been able to shed off. Metaphysics always survives on the capital of paradoxes which it knows it can never solve. The question of time is a

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, p. 161.



trap set by metaphysics to catch thinking and to paralyse it so that it does not threaten the accumulated capital of paradoxes. Kantian critique made the first step towards escaping this trap by shifting the standpoint of thinking to the very source of these deceitful paradoxes — time, the inner sense of the subject. Critique fights back the paralysing effect of paradoxes by simulating paradoxes to hyperbolic limits. However, Kant succeeded only partially because he could not think free of the relation between time and the immutable form. By laying bare the time-form on to a spatial distribution Foucault completes the task set by Kant. With a post-Nietzschean empiricism which trusts only masks, Foucault twists himself free of the history of hackneyed and paradoxical thinking. The evil genius of the genealogist wanders through the spatiality of prisons, hospitals and lunatic asylums in broad daylight of noontime, when the nightwatchmen of time are fast asleep, plunders the archival heritage they guard, and walks away, measuring the distances by the steps of a dove and smiling like a child still in sleep.

## 5.3 Deleuze: Simulacral Synthesis

So far we have been articulating simulation as supplementarity, contamination, folding, polymorphism etc. Deleuze provides a rigorous account of simulation as the synthesis of difference. Usually imitation has value only in so far as it is appropriated into the economy of the original. Deleuze retrieves the simulacrum as mere imitation but with a mode of production specific to it. Thinking, as simulation, is both production and selection. It produces difference and also selects or makes a difference.

However, Deleuze's thoughts on simulation is distributed over many serial reflections and plateaus. He characterises simulacrum in many ways; as phantasm, disjunctive synthesis of difference, partial object, the will to power and the Dionysian machine etc. It is impossible to bring all these characterisations, arising as responses to different problematics and different thinkers, into a coherent whole. What we wish to do here is to follow some of these series to some extent till the neighbourhood of simulation and illuminate our central theme. Through out this discussion we shall be concerned about how the simulacrum escapes the ruse of the symbol which as we have seen is the dwelling of man at the interface between the human sciences and philosophical reflection.

Deleuze's reflections on the simulacrum mark the beginning of a critical ontology. Critique is the philosophy of production and selection. Critique distinguishes the objects of experience from their condition. This condition cannot be a separate transcendence but must be immanently synthesised. As we have seen critique also calls for selection. Traditional



critique understands selection as the unmasking of illusions through proper selection and selection of the proper. To be under illusion is to mistake the fake, the counterfeit for the original. To be able to avoid illusion we should be able to select, to distinguish the fake. In this sense, selection, the principle task of critique, is antithetical to simulation. Since Plato simulation is the source of illusions. It proliferates the world with copies, imitations, giving rise to confusion between the model and the copy, essence and appearance. Philosophy has acquired considerable mastery over the distinction between essence and appearance even to the extent of being able to affirm the lack of being of appearance. But simulation eludes this mastery.

Though both copy and simulacrum are derivatives of the original, simulacrum is not a degraded copy, twice at remove from the original. Deleuze distinguishes between simulacrum and copy. A summary of their differences would help us in the ensuing discussion.

- (1) Copy relates to the original through the Idea. Simulacrum relates to the model external to the Idea. It takes hold of the model by ruse, by violence. Copies are true pretenders whereas simulacra are false pretenders. Copy relates to the original through resemblance. Simulacrum relates through dissemblance, through perversion. Simulacrum too produces the effect of resemblance, but it is produced, as it were, under cover. Even though the simulacrum resembles the model externally, it works by internalising dissimilarity.
- (2) The resemblance between the copy and the original is productive of identity. Resemblance assembles. But simulacrum is fake and produces difference.
- (3) Simulacra do not expect an eye that can see similarity despite differences. They overwhelm the spectator — as in *trompe l'oeil* paintings by their huge size and depths. Instead of resembling reality they produce the effect of resemblance. Usually we look at a painting from a perspective. But simulacra include the perspective and the distortion the perspective introduces, within themselves. The simulacra deceive the eye not by creating an exact imitation of reality, but by eluding the privileged position of the gaze. “The eye instead of being the source of structured space is merely the internal point of flight for the convergence of objects.”<sup>71</sup> Instead of merely imitating reality, simulacra take hold of the reality principle of representation itself. Every representation has a reference to something real. The simulacrum mimics this reality effect.

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<sup>71</sup>Baudrillard, “On Seduction”, in *Selected Writings*, p. 157.



- (4) According to Plato, evaluations with respect to the Idea is Knowledge. Evaluations at the level of representation is opinion. The simulacrum is outside knowledge and opinion. Hence, philosophy has viewed it as a privileged object of suspicion.

Deleuze brings critique to bear on the simulacrum. As we have mentioned, for Platonism thinking makes differences whereas simulation blurs them. Selection is usually interpreted negatively as exclusion — exclusion of simulacrum, the fake. By conceiving selection as simulation, Deleuze gives it a positive interpretation. Is this not a mere inversion of Platonism?

The principle of selection has been conceived differently by different thinkers. For Plato it is a method of division. For Leibniz it is the principle of compossibility. In Kant selection obeys the principle of disjunctive syllogism. For Nietzsche, the eternal return is the principle of selection. Deleuze's interpretation, like a vagabond, traverses all these interpretations, selecting and synthesising according to a new principle of selection. Like the Baroque thinkers whom he admires Deleuze invents principles with pleasure and brandish them like swords. What his principle of simulation says and what it does enter into a new relation. On the one hand it gives the relation between thinking and being. That is, it gives an ontology of selection or a critical ontology. On the other hand, selection as simulation is the simulacrum of a principle. It is this double relation that opens up a positivity from where Deleuze can critically view the relation between logos and being. This bestows him with a thinking which enables him to construct an immanent relationship with being as well as with all the hitherto invented principles and philosophical concepts whose reality does not belong to the history of philosophy. We shall soon see how this thinking escapes an epistemology and ontology of the symbol which sustains the human sciences.

Simulacrum is a phantasm. It is as phantasm that simulacrum acquires fictionality. Every representation is in a sense fictional. It re-presents in the absence of the represented and the representer. Phantasm and its fictionality do not fall within representation. In other words as phantasm, simulation breaks away from representation. Deleuze conceives fictionality in terms other than that of absence.

The philosophy of the symbol which informs epistemological and ontological engagements with the human sciences demands the progressive dissolution of the phantasm in the symbol. Fiction provides the imperishable fund of meaning for the sustenance of the symbol. The source of production of fictionality is productive imagination, which is strictly distinguished from reproductive imagination. Here fictionality is interpreted as productive absence. This dissolution of the fictional in the symbolic finds a very rigorous and sophisti-



cated treatment in Paul Ricoeur. We shall follow his account of the journey of the phantasm to the symbol, to evaluate the difference Deleuze makes.

For Ricoeur too, phantasm originally is outside the order of representation. It is the work of desire. Ricoeur sketches the hidden logic which guides phantasm from the order of desire to that of meaning. He brings out an immanent telos which unfolds through the order of representation, raising the phantasm to the status of a symbol. It is worthwhile to follow this hermeneutic path in some detail because, in Ricoeur we find the best articulation of a philosophy of language from which Deleuze is struggling to move away. Also Ricoeur poses the question of the phantasm in the context of psycho-analysis which is an active concern of Deleuze. Lastly, Ricoeur thinking on phantasm has a deceptive similarity with Deleuze's — perhaps because of their individual encounters with Lacan — which calls for a precise distinction.

Ricoeur traces the internal evolution of the most enigmatic figure of the father from the the phantasm of the father, to the father as the castrator who must be killed, to the symbol of the father who dies out of compassion.<sup>72</sup> This figure is a "designation that is susceptible of traversing a diversity of semantic levels". Ricoeur follows this movement of constitution of the father figure on three registers. The first level is the economy of desire articulated by psychoanalysis. On the second register, the father figure undergoes a historical evolution as sketched out by the phenomenology of spirit. On the third level an exegetical theology will interpret the figure as the name or symbol of God. Ricoeur argues that, despite the difference in these registers, if the father figure returns with an insistence at all these levels, then there must be a single schema of fatherhood which informs the constitution of this figure in all these levels.

If something like an identical constitution of fatherhood, an identical structural rhythm, an *identical return of the initial figure* through the network of the other figures, can be discerned in three different registers, then there will be some chance that the analogy, or better, the homology of constitution, will reveal a single schema of fatherhood.<sup>73</sup>

This reference to the schema is unmistakably Kantian. The constitution of meaning is the synthetic act of the productive imagination. Ricoeur gives it an Hegelian cast. That which

<sup>72</sup>Ricoeur, "Fatherhood: Phantasm to Symbol", in *The Conflict of Interpretations*. Deleuze in *The Logic of Sense* approvingly refers to Derrida's interpretation of the Platonic simulacrum (Derrida, *Dissemination*). For Derrida, writing is a simulacrum, a false suitor, insofar as it claims to take hold of the logos by violence and by ruse or even to supplant it without passing through the father (Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p. 361). We shall follow the thread of this suggestion and examine the relation between the father, the symbol and the simulacra.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid*, p. 469 (Italics mine).



returns is schematic; in each of its turning it crosses the same point but each time at a higher level. The figure passes through the levels of desire, power and meaning; from the economy of desire to the dialectic of power, then to the eschatology of prayer. Ricoeur begins by granting the exteriority of desire and power to the order of meaning, but through mediation, he retrieves them as semantic fields. Ultimately, both desire and power are constituted according to a semantic schema and both follow an immanent designation to the symbol-meaning.

At the level of desire, the Oedipal triangle offers the schema for the constitution of desire. Phantasm is this schematised desire. For Ricoeur, desire is not a blind force; it is constituted at the level of instinct. The phantasm of the father proceeds from the infantile omnipotence of desire. The father is the phantasm of a being who withholds power from the son. The schema for the phantastic projection of desire and its progressive destruction is real with respect to instinct but unreal with respect to representation. The schema of the Oedipus complex constitutes desire which in the course of its fate, turns back and destroys the Oedipus complex, allowing a smooth transition from phantasm to representation. From the destructive identification of the Oedipal stage to the mutual recognition of representation and then to the autonomy and independence of personality; such is the odyssey of the phantasm.

Ricoeur admits the resistance of the phantasm to symbolisation. But soon it is revealed that this resistance is only a ruse of the symbol. Hence the figure of the father acquires its role in the kinship relation, only through the mediation of other non-kinship figures — the master, the leader etc. The intrusion of these external figures to break the resistance of the phantasm “crack(s) the literalness of the father figure” and liberates the symbols of fatherhood and sonship. Through this process the figure of the father undergoes a reduction; death of the father and his metaphorical return is the very possibility of symbolisation.

At the level of the symbol, the phantasm returns as pure metaphor. The literal father dies — the literal meaning of his physicality, begetting and personhood perish. Father is a pure name without denotation. Through this process the father is miniaturised and universalised. At the level of the ethical life of the historical community the father returns as a spouse, abandoning his personality. At the theological level he returns bereft of his idol, and the word of prophets, but as his name, invoked in the solemnity of prayer.

It is against the background of this symbolist conception of phantasm that we shall study Deleuze's view of phantasm as simulacra. Let us summarise the points at which the symbolist comes deceptively close to the simulacral conception of phantasm. Ricoeur concedes the resistance of the phantasm to symbolisation. He stresses the necessary intervention of



non-kinship figures in pulling the phantasm out of its inertia. While the family drama of Oedipus returns at all levels, it is progressively freed from its literality. This gradual death of literality informs the very constitution of the symbol. The passage from the phantasm to the symbol is the passage from the literality of the Oedipal story to its fictionality. Phantasm is an archaic fiction. It is imaginary only in the sense of anticipating the fictionality of the symbol.

For the symbolist, desire and power are exterior to the order of meaning, but are not unmediated or blind forces. From its very inception desire is schooled in the family drama. Power is constituted in the desire for mutual recognition and it evolves in the tutelage of cultural figures. Finally both desire and power learn to listen to the voice of the scripture. At each level schema are formed and dissolved. But the scheme of the schema persists.

Ricoeur clearly shows that it is pointless to replace the content of one schema with another — say, the Oedipal triangle with class struggle, or with Holy Trinity. He frees the schema of desire, power and meaning from their literality and arranges them according to a logic which is derived from the very dissolution of their literality.

We establish a link from Ricoeur to Deleuze around an enigma of the symbol which the former sets as the task for future philosophy to solve. While each of the three levels operates according to its own logic, the logic of transition from one level to the other remains enigmatic. What is the reason or meaning of this distribution itself? How does a phenomenology find a point of insertion in an economy and a theology in phenomenology? What is the link that connects the structures and processes which constitutes these levels? Ricoeur addresses these questions while setting the task of a future philosophy of the symbol.

How are desire, spirit, god connected? Put differently, what is the reason for the analogies or structure and process among the three fields considered? What that question demands of the philosopher is nothing else but this: to undertake again, with renewed energy, the task assumed in the last century by Hegel, of a dialectical philosophy which would take up the diversity of the schema of experience and reality into a systematic unity.<sup>74</sup>

Deleuze's thoughts on phantasm and simulation should be regarded as a response to this task, but along a path, totally different from the one set by Ricoeur. This path goes beyond dialectics itself. Deleuze's attention squarely falls on the constitution of the schema which organises the diversity into a systemic unity. He goes to the very source of schematism and uncovers that mysterious art which since Kant has been hidden in the depth of human soul.

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 497.



The symbolist thinking grants primacy to the symbolic and pushes phantasm to the imaginary. Under the tutelage of the reality principle, the imaginary matures in the symbolic. By going beneath the schematicism Deleuze liberates phantasm from the domain of the imaginary. Breaking himself from symbolist thinking he questions the three fold division of the symbolic, the real and the imaginary. For him the important question is not whether the phantasm is imaginary or symbolic but what is the relation between the order of phantasm and the order that is divided into the above three levels. How does phantasm institute and interfere with the analogical relation between the structures and processes? Simulation is the logic of this analogy. This logic should not be thought of in terms of schematicism though it is not independent of it. Phantasm resists and constitutes the schema and the symbol, not according to the dialectic of master and slave but by a more primitive strategy — simulation.

By posing the question of phantasm in relation to schematicism, we can stay close to the problematic of the critique and the subject. As we have seen for Kant, schema gives the rule for the relation of the concept with the object as well as the subject. It gives the conditions for the experience of all possible objects of experience. While the totality of the objects of possible experience is determined as the world, the inner nature is determined as the person. Kant unmasks the myth of all prior harmony between the concept, the subject and the object, by uncovering the free and productive imagination that constitutes this relation. But he mystifies the source of this art of constitution. For Deleuze simulation relates the phantasm and the schema — or the very order of the concept, subject and the object. Hence simulation is, we might say with enough pre-cautions, pre-conceptual, pre-subjective and pre-objective.

However, in an important sense Deleuze remains within the Kantian critical tradition; he maintains, even more radically than Kant himself, that the relation between thought and Being is synthetic and not analytic. Going a step ahead of Kant, he uncovers the synthetic constitution of the Ideas of reason — the world, the self and the God. What is the nature of this synthesis?

Deleuze delineates three modes of syntheses. The connective synthesis bears upon the construction of single cause and effect series (if ... then). The conjunctive synthesis constructs a convergent series (... and ...). The disjunctive synthesis produces divergent series (either ... or ... or). Deleuze proposes an affirmative employment of disjunctive synthesis as the synthesis proper to simulation.

To understand the nature of these modes of synthesis, we shall begin with Leibniz. As we have seen, the idea of synthesis is expected to account for the relation between reason



and Being. Leibniz's principle of sufficient reason demands that for anything to be, there has to be a sufficient reason. Deleuze interprets Leibniz to mean that the relation between reason and being suggested in the principle of sufficient reason is not analytic but synthetic. Leibniz works out this relation in terms of compossibility and convergence. The possibility or impossibility of individuals can be tracked down from the convergence of a series of predicates. Compossibility does not presuppose the inherence of the predicate in the subject. Only those predicates which belong to the compossible events inhere. That is, events and their compossibility have primacy over predicates.

Two events are compossible when their corresponding series, extending in all directions, converge. They are impossible if the corresponding series diverge. A world is "an infinity of converging series, capable of being extended into each other, around unique points" These unique points are called singularities. Another world appears when the obtained series diverge in the neighbourhood of singularities. Within the world, individuals are constituted by the convergence of a finite number of singularities. The world and the individual are constituted by a selection procedure which selects convergence and excludes divergence. A singularity is extended analytically over a series till the vicinity of another singularity. But the convergence and divergence of series are synthetic. The individual expresses the world — though it clearly expresses only a part of this world — because, the individual is in a world as convergence and the world is formed only in the vicinity of individuals.

The constitution of the world involves an ontological selection. Leibniz assigns this task of selection to God. God excludes divergent series and composes the world as a convergent whole. Though Leibniz accepts the anteriority of events and their convergence he gives only a supportive or negative role to divergence in ontological selection. Kant goes a step ahead and conceives divine selection as immanent in the series. God is now an Idea of Reason. But still disjunction has only a negative role. Totality is conceived as a disjunctive series. From this series particular beings are determined by the exclusion of predicates under the identity of the concept.

Kant conceives reason syllogistically. He expresses the ideas of reason in corresponding forms of syllogism. World is the principle of hypothetical syllogism, the self is the principle of categorical syllogism and God that of disjunctive syllogism. The syllogistic conception of reason is this: when a concept is given, it is predicated to an object only through another concept which conditions this attribution. This search for concepts comes up against categories which are attributed to all objects of possible experience. The attribution of categories is conditioned by the Ideas of Reason. The idea of self conditions the attribution of



the category substance to all phenomena. The Idea of the World conditions the attribution of causality and the Idea of God conditions the attribution of the category community or co-existence. The sum total of all possibilities is conceived as a disjunctive series, and God, the master of disjunctive syllogism, determines beings by exclusion or limitation. To use the Leibnizian vocabulary, God, through enacting disjunctions or exclusions, establishes communication between series. Beyond, outer sense (world) and inner sense (self) God guards the common sense which is the ground of the universal communicability of judgements.

Deleuze affirms the disjunctive synthesis without submitting it to the identity of the concept. This is the affirmation of difference and divergence. To affirm difference means to affirm its relation to the same without submitting that relation itself to the order of the same.

As a rule two things are simultaneously affirmed only to the extent that their difference is denied, suppressed from within, even if the level of suppression is supposed to regulate the production of difference as much as its disappearance. To be sure, the identity here is not that of indifference, but it is generally through identity that opposites are affirmed at the same time, whether we accentuate one of the opposites in order to find the other, or whether we create a synthesis of the two. We speak, on the contrary, of an operation according to which two things or two determinations are affirmed through their difference, that is to say, that they are the objects of simultaneous affirmation only insofar as their difference is itself affirmed and is itself affirmative.<sup>75</sup>

Affirmation of difference doesn't mean to identify two contraries with the same, but to measure contrariety itself with respect to a finite distance between them. What is affirmed of difference is this positive distance. This affirmation is not innocent. It brings death to the self, the world, God. The very schematic unity in which they are embedded is disrupted.

Rather than signifying that a certain number of predicates are excluded from a thing in virtue of the identity of the corresponding concept, the disjunction now signifies that each thing is opened up to an infinity of predicates through which it passes, on the condition that it loses its identity as a concept and a self.

The self is dispersed across divergent series which communicate at singularities, not through convergence but through what Deleuze calls resonance. This communication of events replaces the exclusion of predicates. The series of predicates, before submitting itself to the identity of the concept, communicates with other series in terms of an eventmental compatibility or incompatibility. The entity that traverses this divergent series is not subject to the identity of a self as an individual. "Each dissolved self returns through itself only by

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<sup>75</sup> Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p. 172.



passing into the other, and wills itself only through a series of roles which are not its own."<sup>76</sup>

This pre-individual self is the singularity. Disjunctive synthesis is the constitution of this singularity in its pre-individual divergence. Compossibility is the continuum of singularities. Each impossible world is a variant of the same story. Deleuze sets himself the task of thinking the same, which worlds share, despite their impossibility. This same is to be thought of as the single cast of a dice which produces all throws. The object= $x$  which all these worlds share has the form of a person.

As for the absolutely common object in general is concerned, with respect to which all worlds are variables, its predicates are the primary possibilities or the categories. Instead of each world being the analytic predicate of the individuals described in the series, it is rather the impossible worlds which are the synthetic predicates of person defined in relation to disjunctive syntheses.<sup>77</sup>

Here Deleuze opens up a transcendental field which is pre-personal and pre-individual and account for the genesis of the person-individual. This is a field of singularities. "Individuation does not go from a genre to smaller and smaller species, in accord with a law of convergence or of prolongation that ties the individual to one world or another."

This transcendental field is play — not a game which philosophers are so fond of exemplifying in chess but an ideal play — gambling, where all throws have a single casting of the dice. Here we get behind God as the form of individuality and common sense and discover its constitution. The same is now thought of as co-presence in impossible series. This takes us back to the Aristotelian problem about simultaneity and the co-presence of two consecutive "nows". Deleuze once again opens up this problem of the passage of time which Kant hoped to have solved with the three fold division of sense in to outer, inner and common. Deleuze proposes the principle of simulation as a solution to this problem of simultaneity.

If the noetic pole of the disjunctive synthesis is singularity, the noematic pole is thought of as partial object. Deleuze takes this term from the tradition of psychoanalysis following Melenie Klein. Klein is one of the few early interpretaters of Freud to look into the pre-Oedipal stage of infant life. Her attempt was to show that the schema of the Oedipal drama was constituted in the infant's relation to objects in the early part of infancy. She found two stages in the development of the infant; a paranoid-shizoid position which extends over the first three to four months of the life and a depressive position which extends over the rest of the first-year. These stages can be characterised by the object-relations of the

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*, p. 299.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, p. 115.



infant. In the early stage the infant does not perceive the mother as global person. Instead, it splits the mother's body into parts (mainly breast). Every partial object is a double — good and bad. This relation to partial objects obeys two mechanisms — introjection and projection. The child introjects the partial objects — both good and bad objects into its own body. These bad objects creates anxiety in the child about the explosion or intoxication of its body. This leads the child to an aggressive projection of the bad objects on to the mother's body to explode it, to poison it. This aggressiveness can turn against the ego of the infant, splitting it into parts and projecting it onto the external and internal objects. According to Klein the introjected good objects forms the nucleus for the crystallisation of the ego leading the child from the paranoid-schizoid position to the depressive stage where it will be able to identify global persons and completed objects.

We can attribute Deleuze's interest in object-relation psycho-analysis to the following reasons. It shows him the possibility of 'individuating' objects in terms of a value differential — good and bad — without reference to the whole of which the objects are parts. Partial objects are partial in a double sense. They are parts. They are also partial in the sense of a judge being partial — in taking a decision with respect to good and bad.

According to Deleuze the good object is not the complete object which forms the telos of bad and partial objects. Also, completeness is not something which partial objects lack. Partial objects are not subjected to any transcendental law of the complete object, though they produce the complete object. They do not represent any lost totality. According to Deleuze, Klein missed this logic of partial objects. She treated them as mere phantasies and not as genuine production. So she was led to an idealist position on objects. She conceived partial objects as derived from and culminating in wholes.

We are told that partial objects are caught up in an intuition of unity that precedes its fulfillment. (Even in Melanie Klein, the schizoid partial object is related to a whole that prepares for the advent of the complete object in the depressive phase.) It is clear that such a totality-unity is posited only in terms of certain mode of absence, as that which partial objects and the subjects of desire "lack".<sup>78</sup>

It is from the stand point of this affirmative synthesis that Deleuze provides a critique of the paralogisms of psycho-analysis produced in the course of its illegitimate movement from detachable partial objects to the detached complete object from which "global persons derive by an assigning of lack".

We shall clarify the relation between this critique of the theory of partial objects as lack and simulation by taking a detour through Lacan's theory of mirror stage. In his

<sup>78</sup> Deleuze, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 72.



discussion of the mirror stage Lacan argues that the ego-identity of the child is formed when the child recognises himself in the mirror.<sup>79</sup> The unity of the 'I' of the child is not anterior to the mirror stage. The child is able to collect the image into a unity only to the extent that it misrecognises the gap between the image in the mirror and itself. It is only this misrecognition that can bring the infinite regression of self-reflection — the reflection of me seeing me seeing ... — to a halt. In other words the identity of the subject is grounded in a fiction. But how does the fiction overcome the regress of self-identification. What criteria does the child possess to identify its own image and nothing else?

According to Lacan, the unconscious subject which is a drift over a chain of signifiers does not contain any such criterion. So he posits an *object petit a* to resolve this problem. It is the anticipated unity of the image kept in abeyance — never made present to the subject. The *object a* brings the regress of reflection to a halt not by appearing itself within the image but by its essential non-presence. That is, the subject has prior acquaintance with something in the image which can anchor the recognition of the subject without itself appearing in the image. So Lacan conceives this object as the ego's own splintered part. The child responds to the perpetual drifting of the signifiers by splitting itself off. The pre-mirror stage ego is the perpetual self-destruction by splitting and effacing behind drifting signifiers which in fact is the cause of the destruction. What the child sees in the mirror is this self-effacing itself — its own death. This encounter raises the crisis of the subject to a structure.

The *object a* arrests the regress of reflection because it is not reflected. It is essentially non-specularisable. It escapes the mirror by its non-appearance. It is a non-iterable singularity. This object is not a signifier but a stand-in for an essentially inaccessible signifier — the Phallus.

In order to preserve itself as a unity and interiority, the subject has to split itself and sacrifice a part of its self, which it can never reflexively retrieve. The subject can recognise the *object a* because it was its own part. The *object a* anchors the subject's identity only to the extent that it is not doubled in the reflection.

After the mirror stage the child is no longer threatened by the possibility of walking straight into the mirror and disappearing into it (or to the other side of the mirror). As a price for this security the child gives up a part of it which it can never see in the mirror. Henceforth the mirror will have only one side. The mirror is the structure of my separation from myself. In other words it is language itself.

Deleuze interprets this *object a* which, for Lacan, is a non-duplicable object or a

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<sup>79</sup>Lacan, "The Mirror Stage," *Ecrits*, p. 134-167.



stand-in which makes identification possible, as simulacra, that is as essentially double. It is because the *object a* is simulacra that entry into the symbolic order necessitates a doubling device, that is mirror. In other words doubling is prior to and different from the drifting of signifier. The fictionality in the constitution of the subject comes from the order of doubling rather than from the lack of an ever drifting signifier. Simulation is a positive, non-reflexive relation of the ego to its split-off. The partial object anchors identity not by its non-iterable, indivisible individuality but by the iterable, divisible singularity. For Deleuze, the 'same' is neither *idem* or *ipseity* but simulacra — as eternally repeatable.

Simulation as disjunctive synthesis leads us to the thought of the eternal return. Synthesis is usually thought as the production of order out of chaos. Thinking as production seems to have an inherent affinity to order. Disjunctive synthesis, affirms chaos in affirming this inherent movement as a forced movement across a finite distance separating order and chaos. The eternal return is the law of this synthesis.

According to Deleuze, Nietzsche's doctrine of the eternal return has two aspects; (1) cosmological/physical doctrine and (2) ethical/selective doctrine. The cosmological aspect shows how the eternal return is a synthesis of diversity and multiplicity. The selective aspect is the rule for practical synthesis. The cosmological doctrine articulates the disjunctive synthesis which we have already discussed. The selective aspect of the eternal return gives an account of the genesis of value. It explains the relation between critique, which is a decision and a selection and the repetition of simulation. Hence in the following discussion we shall try to explicate this second aspect of the doctrine of the eternal return — the principle of selection.

If everything returns, how can the eternal return also select? Zarathustra felt extreme disgust when he learned that even small men returns.<sup>80</sup> The thought of the eternal return transforms Zarathustra into a Convalescent. Zarathustra does not come to terms with the fact of everything returning. What happens is a dramatised learning of the secret of the eternal return through a seven-day long sleep. It is not the awareness of a limitation that comes from the outside. It is also not the acceptance of a categorical imperative, which could only produce disgust. What is this dramatised learning and what is this secret lesson. Who is Zarathustra the teacher-dancer?

There are two ways to approach this riddle. One is the path followed by Heidegger. He interprets Nietzsche's principle as the eternal return of the same and ontologises selection and repetition. A different path is broached by Deleuze - to establish an ontology which is

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<sup>80</sup> "Eternally returns the man of whom you are weary, the small man ... and the eternal return of even the smallest - that was my disgust with all existence. Alas! Nausea!, Nausea!, Nausea!" (Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra* § 3:13).



selective and critical. For him, what returns is the difference. Deleuze initially interprets the eternal return as a selective thought and then raises it to the level of a selective ontology of being. In this sense, the eternal return addresses two perennial problems of critical philosophy — the origin of value and the relation between thought and being.

For Deleuze, two streams of philosophy meet in the question of value — critique and the philosophy of the will. This double turn was announced since Kant but always postponed till Nietzsche. Deleuze says “Critical philosophy has two inseparable moments: the referring back of all things and any kind of origin of values, but also the referring back of these values to something which is, as it were, their origin and determines their value.”

The critical philosophy of Kant and Schopenhauer is incomplete because they limited themselves to criticising things in the name of established values. The roots of this incompleteness or lack of courage can be traced back to their philosophy of will. The interpretation of the eternal return as practical synthesis and will to power as the principle of this synthesis is expected to draw critical thinking to its completion.

Deleuze understands the thought of the eternal return as a performative or as a dramatisation. To dramatise is not to give a fictional extension. For Nietzsche to dramatise is to show the world in a mirror as composed by forces, as a play of the wave of forces. This is not to put on an appearance. Also mirroring is not a passive imitation. To mirror, or to imitate, is to sculpture a form with the force of a hammer. “A phenomenon is not an appearance but a sign, a symptom which finds its meaning in a current force.” To think the eternal return or to dramatise it, is to place it in a relation to forces in order to make it a symptom of a will, without which it could not be thought.” How does he achieve this transformation from force to will?

Ethics has always found its place in this transformation from the force to the will; from the primordial force of the “I can” to the “I will”, from the capacity to do something to the attestation of that capacity in the “I will”. Law, norm, imperative — how many contraptions have we not invented to conceal the question of value without which this transformation cannot be thought at all. Kant discovered that to move from the belief of being-able-to-do to its actual doing is a synthetic achievement as the actualisation of freedom. However, from the passage of freedom from the “I can” to the “I ought to”, value is introduced as a negative element progressively separating the doer from the act. This separation or distance itself is only a passage for the actualisation of freedom which would abolish all distances and non-identities.

In the traditional philosophy of the will, the value originates in the negative moment



of the will. Value becomes an issue only when there is an incompatibility between the desirable and the preferable. Anterior to this incompatibility, there is a more primordial inadequacy between the desire and the ability to manifest that desire. The ascension from the blind desire to the will is made through progressive recognition of these limitations or inadequacies. In other words, it is the inadequacy of the will to itself, its separation from itself, that is related to the element of value. This negative relationship of the will to itself and to value, on the one hand, confers a pseudo objective status to values and thereby relating will to established values in an essential manner; on the other hand it introduces the element of prohibition as law, or norm to mediate the non-identity of the will, between the subjective nature of evaluation and the objectivity of the value.

The traditional moral philosophy begins with the self positing of freedom and the non-adequacy of the self to manifest the task of freedom. This non-adequacy is progressively brought to awareness, in the recognition of the non-adequacy of my freedom with others' freedom and then the non adequacy between the freedom of the 'we' and the freedom of the 'they'. At each of these stages the question of value arises from a negative relation of the self to its own non-identity with itself. Hence the act of evaluation becomes a reactive response to the lost identity of the will. Value is generated in the negative element in the journey of freedom from desire to power. Hence value appears in the pseudo-objective nature of the negative as already always available, as sedimented, as institutionalised or as established. If Kant's critique only appealed to the established values it is not because of any conservative streak in him which a radicalism could have overcome, but because of the inherent problems of his philosophy of the will and its conception of value.

Deleuze's interpretation of Nietzsche is an attempt to overcome this habit of philosophy to locate the origin of value in a negative element in the evolution of force. This does not mean that he wants to introduce yet another conception of value. His objective is more profound. His aim is not to replace all the existing values with a new set of values. Critical thinking aims for something more humble. The real task is the transvaluation or transmutation of values. The eternal return as transmutation of values is the secret teaching of Zarathustra. Deleuze interprets this transevaluation as simulation.

For Nietzsche, the eternal return is the synthesis of forces and the will to power is the principle of this synthesis. We have noticed that Deleuze interprets the eternal return as simulation and the will to power as simulacrum. This implies that the evaluation of force to will — from the "I can" to "I will" — is the work of simulation. A critical ontology which aims to overcome the gap between value and Being needs to work out this implication.



Force is a differential of intensities. As Nietzsche says the concept of an infinite force is incompatible with the concept of force. However, this finiteness does not subject forces to a constitutive limitation or prohibition. An infinite force that would bear against nothing is inconceivable. A force cannot be constrained by matter either. Forces are related only to other forces. However, a difference in intensities alone cannot produce value. The difference in intensity is a difference in quantity and quality cannot be reduced to a difference in quality. "Quantity is distinct from quantity but only because it is that aspect of quantity that cannot be equalised out in the difference between quantities."<sup>81</sup> Nietzsche seems to imply that while quality is irreducible to difference in quantity, quantity is nothing but the irreducibility of quantitative difference.

The genesis of value demands a transformation of intensity to intentionality. This is the change from the 'can' of force to the 'will' of the will to power. Force by nature is overpowering. Since overpowering needs determinateness — dominant and obedient — a compliment of force is added to force as its internal element. Will is this internal element of forces. The will when added to forces determines them from a double point of view; from the point of view of the principle which governs the synthesis and also from the point of view of the reproduction of the diversity of the objects of synthesis. In this sense the will to power as the principle of synthesis of forces is at once a differential and genetic element.<sup>82</sup> Will to power is the principle of the reproduction of diversity available for synthesis. It ensures that forces pass through the same difference again and again so that diversity is reproduced.

Deleuze interprets the will to power as simulacra because the former is the principle of reproduction of diversity. The will to power is value as the affirmation and recognition of diversity. However how does one recognise diversity without bringing it under the identity of the concept?

It is often argued that without the mediation of the concept, difference would remain an anonymous and unrecognisable dispersion. Without the concept the empirical is an empty and bare particular which cannot be individuated because every 'this' is like any other 'this'. Here difference is regarded as the difference between the actualisations of a concept. Since the concept determines the possibility of actualisations, it is indifferent to the difference between actualisations. To affirm difference means to take this actual difference seriously, despite the

<sup>81</sup> Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, p. 43.

<sup>82</sup> "The will to power is the element from which derive both the quantitative difference of related forces and the quality that devolves into each force in this relation (*Ibid*, p. 50.) Deleuze shows that there has always been a demand on critical philosophy to supply a principle which govern the synthesis from the point of view of conditioning as well as the conditioned. Kant could meet this demand only partially because he presupposed the diversity of the manifold. Nietzsche completes the critical project by conceiving the principle of synthesis as will to power.



conceptual indifference. For Deleuze, the empirical is not an empty, bare particular. The ultimate particular should be internally complex and should have a determinate content. How can particular have content other than through concepts? The empirical can have content only by entering into external or causal relations with other instances. But causal relations are conditioned and not conditioning. Hence it is often argued that causal relations and conceptual relations are incompatible. If the empirical, the empty 'this' has a content then the empirical must be able to relate with each other immanently.

To synthesise difference is to produce this causal content of the empirical. The empirical has a determinate content but it is not given to the immediacy of an intuition. This absence does not seek a representation. It is explained in terms of an immanent causality. A necessity attends the causal genesis of the empirical. This is not the necessity of the concept or law. The radical contingency of causal factors leads to unpredictable effects. But there is a necessity which works immanent to this causal series. It is a cause realised, intergrated and distinguished in its effects and by its effects - an *a posteriori* necessity. There is a resistance, stubbornness with which the unpredictable resists the law. It is this resistance of the chance that is raised to the order of necessity.

However, necessity can be articulated only with respect to the concept. The necessity which attends the immanent causality demands some relation of the empirical instances to the concept. According to Deleuze instances are related to the concept but externally. The empirical instances are related in terms of their non-empty difference. The concept or law are laid out by the side of the instances so that we can measure their distance or difference. Concepts enter into local relationship with the difference of their actualisations.

Hence for Deleuze, the empirical — the bare 'this' — has a determinate content. A necessity or principle attends to the genesis of this content. Under this principle — regularity as opposed to law — the local and fortuitous relation between the concept and the empirical facilitates the recognition of the empirical as a present-individual singularity.

This recognition of singularity or the present-individual difference or intensity brings about the movement from intensity to intentionality. Intensity becomes intentionality to the extent that the former takes as its object another intensity which it comprehends and is itself comprehended, itself taken as its object, onto the infinity of intensities through which it passes."<sup>83</sup>

The transformation of intensity to intentionality is one of infinite and fortuitous modification of forces. Deleuze sees the structure of this transformation as the 'splendour

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<sup>83</sup> Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p. 298.



of the indefinite pronoun.' We have seen that this structure of communication between singularities is the structure of the simulacra. In this transformation the unity of the self is dissolved into the infinite modifications where intensity modifies itself in modifying the other and through such infinite modifications imitates itself through all others returns to itself. This simulacral transformation of intensity to intentionality and the self to singularity is the eternal return.

The dissolved self opens up to a series of roles, since it gives rise to an intensity which already comprehends difference in itself, the unequal in itself, and which penetrates all others, across and within multiple bodies. There is always another breath in my breath, another thought in my thought, another possession in what I possess, a thousand things and a thousand beings implicated in my complications: every true thought is an aggression. It is not a question of our undergoing influences, but of being "insufflations" and fluctuations, or merging with them. That everything is so "complicated" that I may be an other, that something else thinks in us in an aggression which is an aggression of thought, in a multiplication which is the multiplication of the body, or in a violence which is the violence of the language — this is the joyful message.<sup>84</sup>

The change from force to will, from intensity to intentionality is the work of simulacra which affirms difference, dissolves the self and circulates it into others. The recognition of force by another force — which is in the nature of force — is a phantasmic or mimetic recognition. The value is produced in the affirmation and recognition of the non-identity of the 'I will'.

Hence the eternal return selects. Anything which hampers the recognition of difference never returns. Only that which returns an infinite times returns. 'Man', who always dreams about self-presence and the circles he draws around himself never return. For Deleuze the same which returns once and for all does not return. Hence the eternal return is not the return of the same. However, the eternal return is the only 'same' that can be said about that which returns. Deleuze formulates the ontological principle of selective being thus: "The phantasm of Being (eternal return) bring about return only of simulacra". The value creating element of all economy is the simulacra, the counterfeit.

This is the Deleuzian critical ontology of Being as simulacra. The thought which forms this ontology is a transcendental empiricism and an empiricist phenomenology. The transcendental field which Kant localised within a consciousness is now seen as a surface on which phantasms, like the figures of clouds, appear and dissolve. However, these phantasms are created in the transformation of intensity to intentionality which is brought about through

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<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, p. 298.



the recognition and affirmation of difference. Force manifests as will through a simulacral synthesis. This empiricist critique does not interrogate the human sciences at the boundary between epistemology and ontology — at the symbol, instead it finds its place at the interface of ontology and ethics. Here simulation willingly yields to a synthetic thinking.

We shall not take up the impossible task of summerising our encounter with the above three critiques of the human sciences — by Derrida, Foucault and Deleuze. As we have said in the beginning, our purpose is not to bring these three critical endeavors under one umbrella. However, at the end of this study we can say that these thinkers risk their thinking into a crisis that marks our present — the crisis of our relating to ourselves and to our times through an assemblage of sciences called the human sciences. Derrida, Foucault and Deleuze distance themselves from epistemological and ontological investigation and directly take up the complicit relationship which philosophical reflection has established with these sciences. The human sciences mark a crisis in thinking. The figure of man impairs thinking. The aim of the critique of the human sciences, in all these three thinkers is to invent a new thinking which can think through this crisis.

This search for an ‘outside’ consists in the invention and the practice of a regimen which imparts a certain suppleness to thinking, enabling it to sneak into hitherto inaccessible domains of ontology and also to slip out of many perennial paradoxes and aporias. It makes thinking more plastic. While thinking still seeks principles and conditions, these principles and conditions are no wider than what they determine or condition. The condition changes and conditions itself along with what it conditions. The transcendentals are discovered not by appealing to any transcendental experience but by staying close to the actual, through empirical research or through rigorously calculated reading of texts. This is the austerity of the contemporary critique of man. A penetrating interpretative insight, which is cultivated in the strict discipline of austere thinking, discovers man as a phantasmic figure — like the shapes formed by clouds in the sky — as something on its way to dissolution, as something we are ceasing to become. We call this strict regimen that sustains the austere life of thinking by the name ‘mimetics’.

Within this new practice of critical philosophy, the philosophical conceptuality as such is cut to size. Concepts are constructed and set in motion with a calculated playfulness. Critique fictionalises its object through the synthetic act of “eventalisation” or dramatisation. Through this mimetic play critical thinking transforms itself and also its object. The philosophical concept of subject too does not escape this austerity measure. As we have seen,



since Kant, all that is thought in the concept of the subject is nothing but the sense of objectivity. To repeat Adorno's words: "[T]he syntheses of the subject are indirect conceptual imitations of what that synthesis seeks on its own." This view of the subject as a cite for modeling "onto" the object is accentuated by the contemporary critiques. In this mimetic relation the subject is splintered and circulated through all its avatars and oppositions till it returns in the most unexpected and fortuitous ways — along the folds, as the hooks of quotation marks, as the "splendor of indefinite pronoun", as infamy.



# Conclusion

We began our study with the aim of exploring the relation between critique, the philosophical concept of the subject and the present of thinking. We intended this work as a response to the prevailing philosophical opinion that the critique, in turning against itself, has annihilated its own standpoint — the subject. Our aim was never to rehabilitate some version of the subject but to see what role this concept plays in the functioning of the critique in making a decisive response to the crisis of the present. By exploring three major projects of philosophical critique — critique of natural science, of technology and of the human sciences — we have made an attempt to trace the mimetic coupling which plugs the critical machine to the present and sets it to work.

To be frank, from the beginning we have harboured a suspicion towards the recent efforts to replace the subject from the center of the critical enterprise with new paradigmatic concepts. Through our detailed study of the ruptures and the displacement brought about by the inauguration of the Kantian critical turn we realised that the subject of the Kantian critique is a finite and synthetic form. Hence much of the criticisms of the subject which is aimed at the classical determination of the subject misses the mark so far as the subject of critique is concerned.

The Kantian subject though finite and dependent on the manifold of sensible intuitions takes hold of what is given to it by juridical right. It is the genius of Kant to have argued that this authority to give orders has its source in the very finiteness of the subject. The discovery of the standpoint of the finite subject also meant the discovery of an immanent relation between thought and Being. It is only through this immanence that critique can take hold of its object — natural sciences, technology or the human sciences. This means that to take aim at the present the critique needs to *work out* its immanent relation with the present. From Kant to Deleuze we have seen the challenges and achievements of such synthetic and immanent critique.

The immanence is inevitably attended by the production of illusions. For the pre-



critical doubting, errors and illusions have their origin external to reason. With the critical turn, the origin of illusions is affirmed within the very operation of reason. Illusions are produced according to the "eternal and necessary laws" of reason. This acknowledgement of the inevitability of illusions is an affirmation of the finitude of reason. Awareness of illusions can prevent us from being deluded by them but cannot stop their generation.

During our journey through the critiques we tried to focus our attention on the relation between thinking and illusions. The critical experience of the Cartesian Cogito in its encounter with the evil genius has been almost paradigmatic for our study. It is not the logical quandaries of total deception but the ability of the Cogito to affect itself with such a fiction that awakened our interest. This close affinity between critical thinking and illusion led us to the problematic of mimesis.

Our effort to pose the question of the relation between thinking and the present too drove us towards mimesis. Critique maintains an acute sense of the present. It is through philosophical reflections on time that we tried to explore philosophy's relation to its own present. Ricoeur has demonstrated with extreme subtlety the philosophical strategy to appeal to mimesis as a balm for the wounds speculative thinking has suffered at the hands of time. According to him reflection on time inevitably leads to aporia and mimesis makes a productive use of this speculative aporia. We took a different path from the inscrutability of time to mimesis. We were more interested in the power of thinking to present itself with aporia. Our reflection on Aristotle's aporetic formulation showed us that in thinking the essence of time as aporia, one is thinking the impossibility of oneself coexisting with one's own double. Once the essence of time is determined as presence or 'now', the 'now' can be thought only as the impossible possibility of one 'now' co-existing with another 'now'. At the root of the aporia of time we saw that the duplicity of the *simul* — of simultaneity and simulation — which makes "at the same time and same place" impossible to think. Perhaps all that is thought under the concept of time is nothing but the impossibility of simulation. Or the philosophical reflection on time is a vigilance against the duplicity of time. It is from this relation between the philosophical concept of time and the mimesis that we tried to pursue philosophy's mimetic relation to its time.

In the very beginning itself, we distanced ourselves from all attempts to redeem mimesis by distinguishing it from mere reproduction, counterfeit, deception etc. Our wish was to affirm all that has been excluded by these redemptive projects. Force, playfulness and deceit are inseparable from mimetic play. Critical projects which conceive of violence as deformation miss the virulence of force and rivalry present in play. Once play is conceived



in terms of expressivity, deceit becomes nothing more than morbid. Often mimesis takes the most fatal retreat when it is offered a respectable place under the light of truth — truth as adequacy or *aletheia*. So our strategy during the discussion on Kant and Heidegger was to show how mimesis slips out exactly when it is brought into the economy of reason or truth. However, with Derrida, Foucault and Deleuze, it appears that mimesis has finally surrendered to them. We don't deny that a bit of dramatisation is involved in this presentation. However, what is important is not who catches mimesis but to understand the possibilities and limits of each of their critique in relation to the problematic of mimesis; the complexity of the nets made to catch mimesis and the subtlety and cunningness with which the latter escapes. While we tried to relate Kant's inability to pose the question of technology and Heidegger's inability to pose the question of the human sciences to the subversiveness of mimesis, we have not indicated the limit of the critique of the human sciences. Perhaps this critique is too proximate to us to see its limitations.

Kant avoided the aporia of time by elevating time to the status of an *a priori*. However, the synthesis of time as the inner sense resulted in the division of the self into active and passive self, and the separating of the actor and also the product from the act of production. In the Third critique he allowed a free and indeterminate synthesis of the common sense, allowing reason to transgress the boundary between the legitimate and illegitimate uses of reason. Here Kant also allows imitation into the transcendental imagination. However, by excluding deception as forced play and by resorting to symbolism and analogy, Kant appropriates the production of free play to the economy of reason.

However, in the very gesture of dismissing deception, Kant brings together force and illusion. He shows that no logical impossibility of self-deception could have saved the Cartesian Cogito from the spell of the evil genius. Deception works not by form but by force. It is only through an act of force that one could escape from stratagems of the deceiver. Hence the Kantian "I think" is an act of force or synthesis where force congeals into form without being coercive. Time becomes a form of determination and the force that in-forms this form orders the passage of time without the danger of the duplicity of the 'simul'. In thinking time one no longer thinks the impossibility of simulation, because simultaneity has become one of the determinations of time. In the Third Critique while taking the radical step of thinking synthesis without determination, Kant 'vomits' out that he could never digest — force and hence deception.

Reading Heidegger has always been a difficult task for us. Greek, and Latin are totally alien to our ears and we hear about Heidegger's rigorous play on language only from



his English commentators. Our aesthetic sensibilities are schooled in surrealistic art and in the entertainment industry, and in the English translations of Holderlin we could hear nothing more than the echo of tin drums. We tried to overcome these limitations in two ways. Technology, Holderlin and Van Gogh are some of the few instances in which Heidegger strays out of his preoccupation with the texts of philosophy. We tried to stay as close as possible to his engagement with technology. The idle-chatter of technology has more universal communicability than the provincial languages of Europe! However, at the crucial moments of his meditations on technology, we find Heidegger referring to the poetry of Holderlin. Here we decided to examine the critique of technology in relation to mimesis so that the reference to poetry can be comprehended within the very movement of thought. Mimesis tricks ontology where Heidegger looks towards art and privileges poetry. By focusing our attention on the trails of mimesis we tried to ensure that our lack of hearing-aids does not totally hamper our study of Heideggerian critique.

In questioning technology, Heidegger questions thinking to its very element. For him thinking is a discontinuous happening which takes place only in the reversal of epochs. The unity of thinking can only be thought of as a sacrifice of the present to these epochal upheavals. By thinking the present in the register of originary history of reversal and repetition Heidegger offers the stiffest resistance to the metaphysical denigration of mime. By granting concealment and errancy in the very happening of truth he subjects mimesis to ontological questioning. However, our reading of Heidegger was an attempt to circumscribe a spot in the openness of revealing which is not concealed but, as Derrida says, remains "out of focus" and where essences are contaminated and distinctions blurred. This glow or glare of the screen remains unnamed under the familiar name of man.

The critique of the human sciences tears the mask off the face and name of man. It is very important for us to distinguish the critique of the human sciences advanced by Derrida, Foucault and Deleuze from the debate on the human sciences between positivism and critical theory. These three thinkers take their aim at the symbol which provides an interface between thinking and the human sciences. Along three different paths these thinkers uncover the origin of the plenitude and poverty of the symbol in violence and malice. The insistent theme of our present work has been this violence and duplicity which mark the birth of the critical enterprise. With the critical turn, philosophy becomes mature in its courage to wield the power of thinking and in its enthusiasm to play at the masks. From the mirror to the mask — this is the real achievement of the Copernican Revolution

Does this affirmation of violence and duplicity not undermine the ethical foundations



of critique? Perhaps we should have posed this question at the beginning of the study when we called the Cartesian total deceiver an "evil genius". What is the relation between evil and deception? This question which would demand an inquiry into the origin of evil which is prior to the symbolism of evil, is well beyond the scope of our present work. However, we shall take a brief look at one such reflection on the ethics of critical thought in order to indicate the ethical issues opened up by our study. We have in mind Foucault's reflections on an ethics of critique.

Foucault calls this ethics of critique, an aesthetics of existence. What we intend to do here is to explicate this reference to aesthetics in the light of our own reflections on mimesis. The reference to aesthetics does not involve any decisionism. This aesthetics is a way of leading a well examined life by interrogating our relation to truth and giving it new forms and possibilities. He conceives it as the cultivation of a new curiosity which "evokes the care one takes of what exists and what might exist; a sharpened sense of reality, but one that is never immobilised before it; a readiness to find what surrounds us strange and odd; a certain determination to throw off familiar ways of thought and to look at the same things in a different way; a passion for seizing what is happening now and what is disappearing; a lack of respect for traditional hierarchies of what is important and fundamental."<sup>2</sup> This curiosity does not distinguish between good information and bad information. Instead, it multiplies the channels, the bridges, the means of information, the radio and the television networks, the newspapers etc.

Curiosity as a new mode of relation to truth envisages a new mode of critique.

I can't help but dream about a kind of criticism that would not try to judge, but to bring an oeuvre, a book, a sentence, an idea to life; it would light fires, watch the grass grow, listen to the wind, and catch the sea-foam in the breeze and scatter it. It would multiply, not judgement, but signs of existence; it would summon them, drag them from their sleep. Perhaps it would invent them sometimes — all the better. All the better. Criticism that hands down sentences sends me to sleep; I'd like a criticism of scintillating leaps of the imagination. It would not be sovereign or dressed in red. It would bear the lighting of possible storms.<sup>3</sup>

Foucault seems to be advocating a critique without judgement. How does the curiosity promoted by such a critique differ from a certain pleasant indulgence about which Kant speaks in the Third Critique — the charming arts which unlike the beautiful art lacks reflective judgment as a standard of its pleasure?<sup>4</sup> While it is naive to equate Foucault's art

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<sup>2</sup>Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture*, p. 328.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid*, p. 326.

<sup>4</sup>"Pleasant arts are those that are directed merely to enjoyment. Of this class are all those charming arts



of curiosity with the art of gossiping at the dining table we shall not shy away from thinking through their difference. The aesthetics of existence or curiosity is not modeled on charming arts but is a critical reenactment of the philosophical gesture which, combining classicism and romanticism, distinguished arts from entertainment and established an hierarchy between them. Kant's relegation of entertainment to a lower rank is only a prelude to dismissing mimesis as forced play. (Gossiping, though unattended by the feeling of the beautiful is still an art, but the trickster who imitates the nightingale despite the entertainment he provides invokes only disgust.) Foucault's affirmative stance on the relation between thinking and power entails a re-evaluation of the Kantian hierarchy of arts. However, "the aesthetics of existence" has nothing much to do with matters of art. The relation we are drawing between the aesthetics of life and the Kantian aesthetics is only meant to give a clue to what is at stake in calling the ethics of thought an aesthetics. Foucault's curious philosopher is not someone who holds court at the dinner table but the one who philosophises with a hammer and for whom philosophy "is an interaction between analysis, research, "learned or "theoretical" criticism, and changes in behavior, in people's real conduct, their way of being, their relation to themselves and to others."<sup>5</sup>

The clue which may lead us through these two different concepts of aesthetics lies in the relation between time and mimesis. Kant dismisses entertainment as "games which bring with them no further interest than that of making the *time pass imperceptibly*."<sup>6</sup> But here does Kant ask what it means "to make time pass imperceptibly"? How does time pass by us without affecting us and hiding from us? In the Transcendental Aesthetics this was Kant's abiding concern — though he did not say it explicitly, the pathos of the Aesthetics testifies to it. In the Transcendental Aesthetics, Kant allowed time to pass only in we affecting ourselves. Here, in the aesthetics of entertainment, Kant seems to let time pass without affecting us. The mask of the passing 'now' — the simul — which Kant tore off from the face of time in the First Critique seems to be returning in the entertainment.

When Foucault dreams about a critique without judgement he puts thinking back to the masked play and the deceit of time. From the beginning of this study, by drawing the connection between thinking, mimesis and time around the 'simul', we too have been trying to come to grips with the deceit of time. We learn from Mallarmé that mime imitates "under

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that can gratify a company at table, for example, the art of telling stories in an entertaining way, of starting the company in frank and lively conversation, of raising them by jest and laugh to a certain pitch of merriment; when, as people say, there may be a great deal of gossip at the feast, but no one will be answerable for what he says, because they are only concerned with momentary entertainment, and not with any permanent material for reflection or subsequent discussion." Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, § 44.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid*, p. 330.

<sup>6</sup>Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, § 44 (Italics mine).



the false appearance of the present". Derrida's critique of presence goes further than refuting the self-presence and discovers an imperceptible veil that separates the present from itself. Kant chose to counter the deceit of time with the force of synthesis but his refusal to affirm the "imperceptible veil" led him to the denigration of entertainment as the imperceptible passage of time.

The enormous significance of Foucault's reflections on 'power' becomes clear to us once we relate it to the problematic of time. Without this transcendental interpretation Foucault's 'power' easily yields to functionalist interpretations. He is led to think power by his refusal to think the *a priori* as form. Instead of 'forming' space through time, Foucault moves from space to power circumventing time. Subjectivisation — as the 'formation' of the ethical subject is thought as the folding of forces. If at all one were to locate a place for time in the philosophy of Foucault, it could be the angle of this fold.

A Critique which does not hand down judgement is a critique which hold no resentment against the passage of time under the false appearance of the present. It affirms the entertainment, provided by the masquerade of time. Such entertainment perhaps only games like Russian roulette or the bull-fight can provide. This play cultivates the pathos of the Kantian Transcendental Aesthetics into an ethos of thinking.

So far we have seen the resistance of the Aesthetics to a critical practice which wishes to be an aesthetics. Our reference to the Kantian aesthetics was expected to show the implication of mimesis in this resistance. However, this "aethenticisation" of critical thinking faces a more acute challenge from Ethics.

This acuteness is felt not in the opposition of those who clamor for the normative ground of critique but from those who have been sensitive to the relation between thinking and time and have taken the initiative to work out an ethics for the critical enterprise; two best examples of such a creative and friendly challenge are Dallmayr and Ricoeur.

Dallmayr, one of the few rigorous readers of Adorno formulates the relation between mimesis, time and ethics within a post-hermeneutic scenario. As a response to the failure of both transcendental pragmatism and analytical descriptivism to articulate a practical philosophy, Dallmayr makes some initial steps towards formulating a recollective ethics. His does not view recollection as a return to the *a priori* principles of reflection but;

One which sees recollection as probing of opacity or as an effort to decipher the signals of a precognitive or prereflexive practice which is not synonymous with individual or collective designs and which seems less akin to reason than to imagination (or to the poetic wisdom discussed by Vico). Since such practice bypasses subjective predication and the consciousness-object bifurcation, its lessons are not amenable to procedures of inductive inference or conceptual deduction, but only, if



at all, to a process of decoding, a translation which requires all the more diligence as it proceeds not only from fragments but from gaps and partial insinuations.<sup>7</sup>

Here recollection is at once a mimetic approximation to a forgotten nature and a solicitation of goodness. Ethical practice plays us back to nature's "evolving nexus of guilt" and also makes us happy inheritors of a good day which overtakes us during our sleep. This ethics is a mimetics because it folds the subject back onto the moment of bifurcation between nature and culture, transgressing consciousness and once again allowing us to participate in the spectacle of things.

Dallmayr's extremely cryptic and suggestive formulation of recollective ethics finds an elaborate treatment in Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative*. For Ricoeur too recollection is a mimetic and ethical relation to time. We shall now turn once again to Ricoeur to stand on his shoulders and to announce our difference.

Ricoeur conceives our relation to time as a debt to the past which is long dead and yet present in its traces. We are inheritors of a heritage only as insolvent debtors. We take initiative in the present as obligation to those who are dead and to whom we have incurred a debt which can never be repaid. It is this idea of a debt to the dead that gives meaning and objectivity to historical research and art. A painter or narrator who wants to "render something", a landscape or an event, in fact desires to render its due to what is and what one was. According to Ricoeur "whether they put their work under the sign of friendship or that of curiosity, they are all moved by the desire to do justice to the past."<sup>8</sup>

The feeling of debt is not a subjective feeling and is tied to the referential structure of trace. Trace 'stands for', and 'takes the place of' an absent past. Trace is the very passage of time and the mark left behind the passing time. It refers 'here' and 'now' to the past passage of time. The reference of the trace is indirect. This indirectness leaves us the insolvent debtors to the past. Our insolvency is not due to our excessive borrowing but due to the absence and otherness of the creditor who is dead and would never come back to demand repayment. For Ricoeur, "Loss is assuredly a figure of otherness". Hence taking up the obligation of the debt to the dead, we are also mourning the irreparable loss of the past. In this sense living in the present is a work of mourning.

<sup>7</sup>Dallmayr, *Twilight of subjectivity*, p. 253.

<sup>8</sup>Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, volume 3, p. 152. Ricoeur implicates not only painters and historiographers but also computers in the debt to time. For him computer memory is only an enlargement of our collective memory. Here we recognise the need for a detailed study on the mimetic aspect of man-machine relations. Instead of asking what are machines if they imitate man, one should perhaps ask what is man if he can be imitated to whatever degree of success by machines. Derrida initiates such a questioning in "Freud and the Scene of Writing" (Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 196-213.) Perhaps computers, like 'archaic' societies write time on their bodies and lack any sense of history and credit systems.



## Conclusion

Ricoeur warns us that the mourning play is not playing tricks on the dead. He works out the relation between mourning, mimesis and time through the referential structure of trace. The reference of trace is irreducible to the category of reference of observational languages and extensional logic. Here we may recall Ricoeur's earlier efforts to introduce the Fregean notion of reference as a corrective to the Husserlian philosophy of language. Initially Ricoeur tried to use the notion of split reference to remove the empiricism of Fregean reference. In *Time and Narrative* he reinterprets this split reference as the indirect reference of trace.

Under this interpretation, trace refers only as loss of appearance and not as false appearance. The conception of indirect reference misses the doubling and duplicity of the trace structure which we saw in Derrida. Though Ricoeur conceives the relation to time in economic terms he does not seem to bother much about what Derrida calls the violent extraction or usure at the origin of all economy. Also, we shall not forget that there is no debt without interest; and no recollection without a cunning calculation. To incur a debt is to be obliged to repay the debt along with interest. According to Derrida to speak economically on economy is to speak about interest, surplus value, fiduciary calculus and usure rate. Ricoeur's relation to time as a mimetic and ethical relation leaves all these things in the dark.

According to our interpretation of Derrida's trace, the trace refers the way quotation marks refer — by doubling and duplication and not by splitting or indirection. The violent extraction of the surplus value which sustains all economies, including the economy of the symbol has the structure of the trace. It is through and through the violence of duplicity. This duplicity is the condition for incurring a debt, even if it is to time.

Our reflections on the pivot of time on which the thinking on time turns, and the interpretation of play as a play of forces which in turn is irreducible to deformation, all lead us to endorse the passage of time as a violent masquerade. An ethics of criticism as an aesthetic of existence needs to affirm this element of deceit which is anterior to obligation and responsibility.

It is beyond the scope of the present study to work out the law of deceit in detail. Our present work is only a beginning to view thinking as a game of deception, a play of masking and unmasking or simulation. Philosophy has tried to come to terms with deception either by granting it the respectability of art or by resenting its illusory nature. Both these amount to a refusal to affirm the passage of time. However, by reckoning time, by counting it, by keeping a watch on it with clocks and watches, have not we always remained on guard against the deceit of time? "Have care, lest I deceive you with a false reckoning of the



interest"; has this not been the warning of time, the signal of the Other, awakening us from slumber to the violence of light?



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